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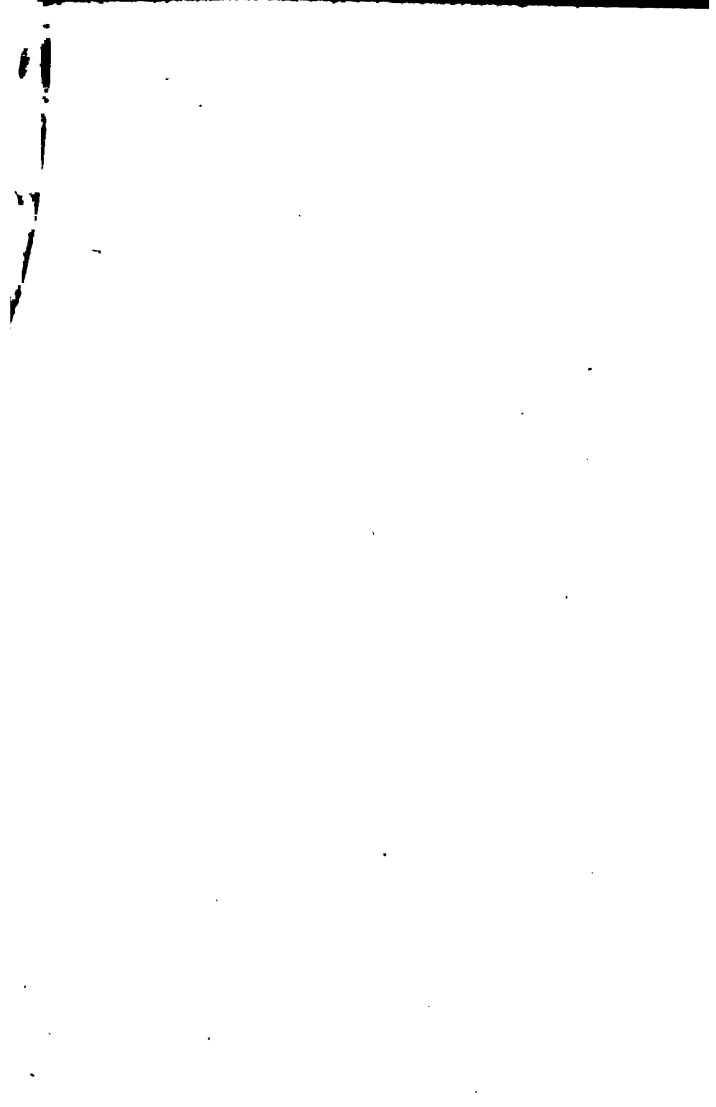
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From her affectionate
Aunt S. Lewis





HAVE ME EXCUSED;

OR,

A PRACTICAL EXPOSITION

OF THE

P A R A B L E

OF THE

G R E A T S U P P E R .

BY

EZRA D. KINNEY, A.M.

PASTOR OF THE CHURCH IN DARIEN, CONN.

LUKE XIV. 15-24.

"A certain man made a great Supper, and bade many."

NEW-YORK:

M. W. DODD,

BRICK CHURCH CHAPEL, OPPOSITE THE CITY HALL.

1846.

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Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1846,

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25288

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P R E F A C E .

ALTHOUGH the author has been in the habit, for many years, of furnishing matter for the periodical press, yet this is his first effort at *book making*. And he does not make this book in consequence of thinking that there are not many, who have never written a book, that are far better qualified than himself for such a task. The train of circumstances which have led to this undertaking, is the following : While the author was engaged in school-keeping, in a mountain town of Vermont, during vacation in college, the late Rev. Abraham Baldwin, who was then labouring as a missionary in a neighbouring town, preached a lecture one evening in his school-house from the text, "And they all, with one consent, began to make excuse." That lecture may be called the germ of this little book. During the author's ministry of twenty years, he has learned from personal experience, that every impenitent person has something in the shape of an excuse, which is preventing his conversion. He has been led, on this account, to note down, and refute, very many of these excuses in his public discourses. It has been the author's delightful privilege to have more or less to do in about fifty revivals, in which some twelve or fifteen hundred souls have professed an interest in the Lord Jesus Christ. He has found, that the Lord has often seen fit to make many of the

thoughts contained in this book, the means of awakening the unconverted, and of leading them to look to the Lamb of God for salvation. It was this consideration, and the hope that what God had blessed when preached, he would also bless when read, which have induced him to think of publishing.

The author has not attempted to make a book for the fastidious, or the learned ; but for " the wayfaring man ;" the simple-hearted, and the child. He has sought to clothe his thoughts in a plain, every-day, Anglo-Saxon dress. If he can make the unlearned and the ignorant understand his meaning, he has no fears but others will understand it also.

The author would embrace this opportunity to express his grateful sense of obligation to those personal friends and others, who have been so kind as to subscribe for his book, before he sent it to the publisher. While some of the members of his own church, and some who profess to have been converted in connection with his unworthy labours, have said to himself or his agent, "*Have me excused,*" you have stepped forward and lent him a helping hand, without which his book would never have seen the light. Whether it will be for better, or for worse, that you have caused it to be printed and read, the judgment-day will disclose. The author would take his farewell by asking you to unite your prayers with his, that this little volume may be made the means of salvation to many souls.

E. D. K.

DARIEN, Conn., Nov. 2, 1846.

TO THE READER.

ARE you a professor of the religion of Christ? This book will give you many hints, and present before you many motives in regard to Christian duty. If you are in doubt as to your eternal prospects, here you will find truths and considerations, which will assist you in understanding your true character. If you are desirous of rendering yourself useful in your intercourse with your fellow men, here you will see how our Divine Master conducted under the different circumstances of life, when he was setting us an example that we should follow. Do you wish to be instrumental in *win-*

ning souls to Christ, and in converting sinners from the error of their ways, this book will furnish you with reasons, persuasions, and arguments, with which to meet the difficulties, and objections, and cavils, and excuses of different classes of unconverted persons. Seldom will you meet with an impenitent sinner, whose excuse for not being a Christian is not here shown to be groundless, and unwise, and unsafe. Carry this book with you for reference, until its arguments are familiar. God has often blessed these truths to the conversion of souls, and he doubtless will bless them again. When you employ them to remove the excuses of the ungodly, always do it with fervent prayer, that the Holy Spirit would use the truth, as the fire and the hammer, in breaking the rock in pieces.

Reader, are you an unconverted person? Are you living without prayer, and without satisfactory evidence, that you have been born of the Holy Spirit, and that old things are done away, and that all

things have become new ? This book was written for *your* special benefit. It has been the writer's aim, from the beginning to the end, to promote *your* welfare. He has written it with an irrepressible anxiety, that you might spend your eternal existence among the happy ones who surround the throne of God, and the Lamb, in the upper world. He has endeavoured to find out *the excuse*, which is leading you to expose your eternal interests, by neglecting the *great*, the *glorious*, the *only* salvation for lost men. Do, I pray you, read this book with seriousness, with candour, with prayer. If you find *the excuse*, which you have harboured, or expressed, for not being a Christian, weigh well and thoughtfully the answer, which the writer has given to it. I would not advise you to sit down and read this book through, at once, or on the same day ; but read a Chapter, or a Section, at a time, and ponder on what you read. Read over the *contents* of the book, and if you see one subject, more than

another, suited to your case, turn to that and give it a careful consideration. If you really *desire* to become a Christian, you cannot fail of becoming one, if you follow the advice, given in different forms, in various parts of this book. That the reading of this book, may result in your salvation from sin and hell, and in promoting your happiness and usefulness in your day and generation, is the earnest prayer of the AUTHOR.

THE GREAT SUPPER.

CHAPTER I.

CHRIST ALWAYS DOING GOOD.

WHEN our blessed Saviour was visibly on earth, he "went about *doing good*." He lost no time. He said : "I must work the work of Him that sent me, *while it is day*, for the night cometh in which no man can work." We find him always busy, and busy too, in his own appropriate work. His mind was fixed upon one great object, and he never lost sight of it. That object was the glory of God in the happiness of mankind. If we accompany him to scenes of affliction, we find him imparting health to the sick ; strength, to the feeble ; soundness, to the maimed ; mental vigour, to the insane ; life, to the dead ; and, comfort, to the sorrowful. Behold him, weary and thirsty, at Jacob's well. While his disciples are gone to buy provisions

at the neighbouring village, we find the Saviour, instead of refreshing himself with gentle slumber under the cooling shade, engaged in the most interesting conversation with a dissolute woman, who came to draw water. He sought, and procured her conversion, and, through her, the conversion of many of her townsmen. If we drop in at the house of Lazarus, as our Lord stops for a social call, we find his conversation so attractive and heavenly, that the erring Mary is drawn from her wonted avocations to sit at his feet, and hear his words. Or, if we take a short journey to Emmaus, Christ will "talk with us by the way, and open to us the Scriptures." Or, should we accompany him as he calls to dine with one of the chief Pharisees, we should hear him pouring forth divine truth to the different classes present, with an eloquence, which burns like fire on the consciences of the ungodly, and which attracts the admiring gaze of the whole audience. Wherever he was, whether he ate, or drank, or whatever he did, he did all things to the glory of God. When he was partaking of his daily bread, he did not seek his own gratification or profit, but he ever sought the profit of those who were with him. Even on such occasions, he improved the time

in comforting the penitent, in rebuking the self-righteous and the proud, in animating the dejected, and in imparting instruction to the whole company.

Christians should learn from Him, whose name they bear, to employ their time, their talents, their opportunities, particularly their *tongues*, in promoting the edification, and the salvation of mankind. Let them do their part in introducing, and carrying on, profitable conversation. Let them ever keep in mind that they are Christ's representatives in this world; and that they *ought to do*, under all circumstances, as far as it is consistent and possible, and proper for them to do, whatever they have reason to think the Saviour would do, if he were there acting for himself.

CHAPTER II.

THOSE WHO RIGHTLY IMPROVE GOSPEL PRIVILEGES
ARE HAPPY.

As our Divine Master was charming the multitude who were listening to his edifying discourse, one of his hearers said unto him, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." It is a very precious privilege to be allowed to enter the visible Church as a worthy member. Those, who have evidence that their sins have been forgiven, deprive themselves of much true happiness, if they remain out of the visible kingdom of heaven—the Church. God says to such, "Come ye out from among them and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing, *and I will receive you*, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." If Christ has a visible Church in this world, who should unite with it, and help add to its beauty and prosperity, if not those whose sins he has graciously forgiven? The Church was institu-

ted on purpose for them. It is to them he says, "Eat, O friends ; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." After our Lord had instituted his Supper, he said to all who love him, "Eat, drink, this is my body broken, this is my blood shed, *THIS DO in remembrance of me.*" It is not enough that we *remember* Christ. He commands us to *do something* in remembrance of him, to *DO THIS*. Every friend of Jesus should, therefore, feel himself *obliged* to unite with the visible Church, and partake of the Lord's Supper in remembrance of him. Blessed is he that is a worthy partaker of the sacraments of the Church—that thus eats bread in the kingdom of God. He finds the ordinances of the Gospel to be food for his spiritual nature. Conscious obedience brings peace of mind, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Cheerful obedience always imparts comfort. Said a pious physician, "The day on which I united with the Church, and received the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, was the happiest day of my life." Multitudes can testify from similar experience, that he who eats bread in the kingdom of God is *happy*—is *blessed*. If this little book falls into the hands of a delaying convert—of one who has tasted that the Lord is

gracious, but has not offered himself to become a member of the visible Church—let him be entreated by a regard to his own happiness, by a regard to the prosperity of Zion, and by a regard to Christ's command and God's glory, to *delay no longer*. “Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.” **TRY IT.**

CHAPTER III.

THE GOSPEL SUPPER IS GREAT.

THEN Christ replied to the man, who had said, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God, "A certain man made a great Supper, and bade many." This certain man who made the Supper is none other than CHRIST himself. By his sufferings and death he has made provisions for the spiritual wants of the human family.

The Supper which he has provided is a *great* Supper. It is sufficient to satisfy the necessities of a *famishing world*. Jews and Gentiles, the rich and the poor, the honoured and the dishonoured, the learned and the ignorant, the free and the bond, the white and the black—all men of every nation, of every complexion, of every variety of character—all, *all* may find in this Supper an abundant supply for all their wants.

Yes, truly, the Supper is GREAT; *greater* than could be furnished by any rich man, or all the

rich men in the world united ; *greater* than would be made by the slaughter of all the flocks and herds, and fowls and fish of the earth, the air, and the waters of this terrestrial globe ; *greater* than could be procured by all the wisdom and wealth and power of all created beings in the universe. Yes, the Gospel Supper is GREAT ; *so great*, that none but GOD, with all the resources of the universe at command, could bear its heavy expenses, or furnish its infinite entertainments ; *so great*, that it is said to have impoverished even the Son of God himself. Says the apostle Paul, "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes *he became poor*, that ye, through his *poverty*, might be rich."

Reader, stop and admire the infinite compassion and love of God, which led him to lay out so much for his enemies ! Will you not give him your heart ? Will you not hasten to partake of this great Supper ?

CHAPTER IV.

WHAT LED CHRIST TO MAKE THIS GREAT SUPPER?

WHAT could induce the Son of God to provide such a Supper, when he knew that it must cost his heart's blood? Was it to get to himself a name? Men are willing, sometimes, to go beyond their incomes, and even to go to the utmost limit of their property, to provide entertainments, or to relieve the poor and needy, that they may thereby gain a *name*. But this was not the motive of our blessed Saviour. When he was about coming into this world to provide the Gospel Supper, he said to the Father, "Lo, I come to do *thy will*, O God." And whilst he was upon earth he testified that he sought not his own glory, but the glory of the Father. His *motive*, therefore, was not a name, although by furnishing this great Supper, "he hath received of the Father a name, which is above every name." That name is JESUS. "At the name of *Jesus* every knee shall bow,

of things in heaven, of things in earth, and of things under the earth, and every tongue shall confess that HE is LORD, to the glory of God the Father."

What, then, did lead the Son of God to make this Supper? Was it to make God *merciful*? God has always been "merciful and gracious; slow to anger, and plenteous in mercies." Was it because men were of such vast importance in God's estimation, that the loss could not be made up to the universe, if they were suffered to perish without an effort to save them? No, God, by a word, could have annihilated this world, with all its guilty inhabitants, and made a larger and better world to fill its place, and a better race of intelligent beings to inhabit it. Did Christ procure this Supper for men, in consequence of their deserving any good at his hand? They deserved evil, and only evil, from the Lord, because they were constantly rebelling against him. Did he provide this feast of fat things, because God could not be *just* in permitting men to perish in their sins, without this effort to save them? If God is *just* in dealing with fallen angels as he does, then would he also have been *just*, had he left our

guilty race under the penalty of his law, without making any provision for their pardon.

Why, then, was this Supper made? It was, that God might consistently *show mercy* to those of mankind, who would come and partake of this royal feast. In other words, it was "that God might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus." The wonder among intelligent beings was, (not, how God can be just and damn the ungodly, but) how God can be just and *not* damn rebellious men. But the Gospel provisions have solved this difficulty. The universe now see the propriety of God's accepting of this costly *Supper*, in the place of the deserved *sufferings* of all those, who can be induced to come and partake of it. These provisions have rendered it consistent with God's justice to pardon, and save, all those who repent and believe in Christ. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life."

Yes, dear reader, Christ died to remove a legal obstruction to our salvation. For *us*, he groaned and died. Without his death, we all must have perished for ever. If Christ had not

made this great Supper *for us*, even the Almighty God *could not* consistently save us. Can we, then, love Christ too much, or do too much for him ?

" Love, so amazing, so divine,
Demands *my soul, my life, my all.*"

CHAPTER V.

MANY INVITED TO THIS GREAT SUPPER.

OUR Divine Saviour has not only *made* this costly Supper, but he has also *bidden* many of our fallen and guilty race to come and partake of it. And how many has he bidden? He has bidden "all those who labour, and are heavy laden." He has invited all who hunger and thirst. "If *any man* thirst, let him come." "Let him that is athirst, come." "Ho, *every one* that thirsteth; come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money: Come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." Yes, Christ has bidden *many*. He says: "Look unto me, *all the ends of the earth*, and be ye saved." He has bidden *you*

and *me*, my dear reader, to come and eat of this great and costly Supper. He is now saying to us : "Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of man : hear instruction, and be wise. Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates. For whoso findeth me, findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord. But he that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul." If Christ has kindly invited *you* to this heavenly feast, will you not now accept his invitation ?

CHAPTER VI.

THE SERVANT WHO CARRIES THE INVITATION.

THE one who made this Supper, sent his servant at supper time to invite the guests. Our blessed Saviour, when here on earth, sent out his disciples to all the cities and villages, whither he himself would come. And when he was about leaving this world, he said to his Apostles: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." "It pleases the Lord, by the foolishness of *preaching*, to save them that believe." The Gospel *minister*, is the servant, whom Christ has sent out to invite men to this great Supper. Every Gospel sermon, is an invitation to sinners to come and share the blessings of divine grace.

The minister, (a word which means *servant*,) preaches the word publicly, and from house to house. He warns, reproves, and entreats his fellow men to come to Christ for salvation. He, in effect, says to them :

“Eternal Wisdom hath prepared
A soul-reviving feast,
And bids your longing appetites
The rich provision taste.”

But not only is the *minister* authorized to invite men to this Supper, but, “let him also that *heareth*, say, Come.” Every Christian is authorized, and *commanded*, to use his influence to bring men to a knowledge of the truth. Christ says to them all: “Go, work to-day, in my vineyard.” The pious parent and child, brother and sister, husband and wife, teacher and scholar, Bible agent and Tract agent, *every one*, who has freely received the grace of God, is commanded to impart it freely to others. You, my reader, should not only come to this Supper yourself, but should affectionately invite all around you to come likewise. Have you heard the Gospel? then say to others, *Come*. If you are Christ’s servant, then do the work of his servant. He expects every Christian to do his duty. *Will you try to win some soul to Christ?*

CHAPTER VII.

THE SUPPER IS NOW READY.

THE servant was sent to the multitudes who were bidden, to remind them that it was supper time, and to assure them that all things were ready, and to urge them at once to come. Thus, ministers and Christians, are to inform their dying fellow-men, that the way of salvation is now open ; that all things are now ready, on God's part ; that the great Supper, which represents the abundant provisions of the Gospel, *is now ready*. And they are kindly, and sincerely, and affectionately to invite them to come, *because all things are now ready*. The servants of Christ, do this publicly and privately, early and late, night and day. They urge men to come in the name of the Great Master, who has provided the Supper. They assure them that "the oxen and the fatlings are killed, and that *all things are now ready*." They tell them, that God the Father is ready to pardon the sins of all who come to this Supper ; that

God the Son, is ready to receive as his friends and followers, all who are induced to come ; and, that God the Holy Spirit, is ready to renew the hearts, and sanctify and comfort the souls of all who come ; and that saints and angels, are ready to rejoice, when they see sinners coming to this Supper.

My unconverted reader, *do you realize* that there is now, nothing in the way of your salvation, *but yourself* ? This Gospel Supper is ready for *you*, as well as for others. It is the only provision that will ever be made for your salvation. God asks : "What more could have been done to my vineyard, that I have not done in it ?" You need not expect him to do more *for you*. Will you not, then, "work out your salvation with fear and trembling ? for it is God who worketh in you to will and to do, of his good pleasure."

CHAPTER VIII.

WHY MEN DO NOT COME TO THIS SUPPER.

IF all things are now ready, and all Gospel sinners are invited to this great Supper, *why do they not come?*

It is not because there is any insurmountable obstacle in their way.

SECTION I.

Total depravity not an insurmountable obstacle.

SOME have thought, that total depravity is an insurmountable obstacle, in the way of sinners coming to this Supper. Men are subjects of this kind of depravity, who are dead in trespasses and sins. And this is the character of all unconverted men. But this depravity, as great and dreadful as it is, does not destroy the *power* of doing right. Men, who are thus depraved, are as really free moral agents, as Chris-

tians are. God speaks *to* them, and *of* them, as though he considered them as capable of choosing the good, and refusing the evil, as holy beings are. He says to them: "Wash you; make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well." And again: "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart, and a new spirit; for why will ye die?" And again: "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?"

God says *of* sinners: "Oh, that they were wise; that they understood this; that they would consider their latter end." Now, if God is honest in these and similar passages of Scripture, (and who dares question his honesty?) then, it seems evident that he considers men as naturally able to obey his voice, and come to the Gospel Supper; as able to "break off their sins by righteousness, and their iniquities by turning unto him." And it is further evident, that men, while under the power of total depravity, lack no essential *ability* to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, from the fact that when they see their sins, they always feel guilty for having committed them, and guilty

for not being Christians. They would not feel condemned and guilty, if they believed that they had no power to do otherwise than they have done, and are doing.

No, my impenitent reader, you will find that, as soon as you are disposed to forsake your sins, and love and obey the Lord Jesus Christ, your depravity presents no insurmountable obstacle in the way of your coming to the Gospel Supper.

SECTION II.

God's purposes no insurmountable obstacle.

SOME suppose, that God's purposes prevent sinners embracing the Saviour. That God has purposes, or decrees, by which he regulates his own conduct, the Bible makes it perfectly manifest. We find in the Scriptures, expressions like the following: "Who are the called, according to his purpose?" "According to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." "This is the decree of the Most High, which is come upon my lord, the king." Now, while it is clear that God has decrees, or purposes, according to which

he works all things, there is not a particle of evidence that his purposes or decrees have ever prevented, or will ever prevent one person from coming to the Gospel Supper. If the Bible does teach that God has decrees, it also as plainly teaches that men are free and accountable agents, possessed of all the ability necessary to bring them to Christ and to heaven ; and that all will be saved, who are disposed to obey God. The decrees of God, will never shut one out of heaven, who repents and believes the Gospel. Neither will the Divine purpose (unless it be by perversion), ever prevent any one from repenting and believing. Those, therefore, who make God's decrees the occasion of their cavilling, and delaying, and refusing to partake of this great Supper, will be found among the "unlearned and unstable," spoken of by the Apostle Peter, who "wrest the Scriptures to *their own* destruction." The decree of God does not prevent their salvation, but they make the doctrine of the divine decrees the occasion of their own damnation. If men would be *wise*, they would not be meddling with "secret things, which belong to God ;" but, would act in religious matters, with as much judgment and reason, as they do in worldly things. The farmer

does not stop to puzzle himself, or others, with the inquiry, whether it is decreed that he shall have a crop, but goes forward in preparing his ground, and sowing his seed ; and if he has a crop, well ; and if not, he has the satisfaction of thinking, that he has done his part. If men will be as wise in spiritual things ; that is, if they will do their part—*do their duty*—no decree of God would shut them out of heaven, or prevent their coming to the Gospel Supper. My dear reader, will you try it ?

SECTION III.

Election not in the way.

MANY have argued that the doctrine of Election stands in the way of some sinners, to prevent their coming to this Supper. Though the Bible assures us “that the purpose of God according to election shall stand” ; and that “as many as were ordained to eternal life, in Antioch, believed ;” and that Christ’s people are “elect according to the fore-knowledge of God the Father ;” yet it nowhere intimates that election prevents any of our race from becoming

Christians. Whom does election shut out from the privileges of Christ's kingdom? Not the elect, surely. Whom then? The non-elect? By no means. Election simply makes it certain that the Great Master of the feast shall have a good number of guests to partake of his Supper. It makes it certain that *some* will come, but it hinders no one. The Supper is large enough for all. All are alike sincerely invited. All have the necessary natural abilities to accept the invitation. And all are, by nature, unwilling to come. *Election secures the attendance of some.* It makes it certain that "Christ's people shall be *willing* in the day of his power." Now, the *certainty*, that "all that the Father has given to Christ, shall come to him," need not prevent others coming. If the way is open for all, and the invitation given to all, and all possess the ability to accept the invitation, then surely the fact of God's *leading some* to accept the invitation, can have no repelling influence on others. Christ says, *Who-soever will*, let him take the water of life *freely*. If therefore *all* do not come to this great Supper, it is not the fault of election. The reason all do not come, is not that they were of the non-elect. My reader, instead of troubling

yourself about the question, Am I one of the elect? "rather give diligence to make *your calling and your election sure.*"

SECTION IV.

None need be excluded by reprobation.

It has been supposed that, if election does not shut some out of the kingdom of heaven, reprobation does. Perhaps it does. But if it does, who is to blame? Let us see who are *reprobates*, and why they are *reprobated*, and then we shall see who is to blame. In Jeremiah vi. 30, we read, "Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord has rejected them." But why are they reprobates, and why has the Lord rejected them? The 28th verse informs us: "*They are all grievous revolters, walking with slanders: they are corrupters.*" They were, then, rejected and reprobated because of their own grievous wickedness. And this is doubtless the case with all reprobates. In 2 Tim. iii. 8, we read, "Men of corrupt minds, *reprobate* concerning the faith;" and in Titus i. 16, "They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abom-

inable, and disobedient, and unto every good work *reprobate*." These texts give us a fair view of the Scripture doctrine of reprobation. And we see that God is not to blame for men's being reprobates. No man, who does his duty—who does as well as he can—will ever be reprobated. If men are reprobates, it is because they are abominable, and disobedient, and hypocritical. They are the guilty causes of their own reprobation.

My dear reader, you need have no fears of reprobation, if you will forsake "all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly and righteously and godly in the world."

SECTION V.

Men CAN come to the Great Supper.

SOME have supposed that men have by nature, no *ability* to come to the Gospel Supper, and that their *inability* is an insurmountable obstacle in their way. But it is manifest from the whole account of this Supper, and from the manner in which those were treated who did not accept the invitation, (see verse 24th,) that

all the inability under which any of those, who were bidden, laboured, was the inability spoken of by one of them in the 20th verse. He said, "I have married a wife, and, therefore, *I cannot come.*" This was the only one of all those, that were invited, who pretended to be kept back by inability. And who will believe that his inability would have been an insurmountable obstacle in the way of his coming, if he had only been strongly disposed to come, and had made his calculations accordingly? And yet, the inability of this man is the only inability spoken of in the Bible, which prevents sinners from enjoying the rich and sumptuous provisions of the Gospel. Our blessed Saviour expressed this inability in somewhat different language. Instead of saying *ye cannot*, like the man who had married a wife, He said, "*Ye will not come to me*, that ye might have life." The sinner manifests his disinclination to religion, and to coming to the Gospel Supper, by saying, "*I cannot*," or "*I can't*," just as the undutiful child expresses his disinclination to doing what he does not want to do. But Christ calls things by their right names. He intimates that it is not so much a *can not* as a *will not*, that keeps sinners from coming to him for sal-

vation. This inability, whether we call it *can not*, or *will not*, is no obstacle in the sinner's way, when he really *desires* and *determines* to come to this great Supper. If men were destitute of the power of choice, and of the attributes of free agency, (which is not the case,) then they *could not* come to the Gospel Supper, though ever so urgently invited ; and then too the Lord Jesus would be unreasonable for inviting them, and for being angry with them for not coming, and for declaring that "none of those men which were bidden, should taste of his Supper." We must, therefore, come to the conclusion that sinners labour under no inability which need prevent their coming to Christ at once, or which will excuse them, for a moment, for not being Christians.

Do you say, my reader, that you want to be a Christian, and have tried to come to Christ but could not find him? You have made a mistake somewhere in your efforts for religion. God says, "Ye shall seek me, and *find me*, when ye *search for me*, WITH ALL YOUR HEART." Instead of seeking *the Lord*, you have been seeking your own happiness and comfort. Or, if you have sought the Lord, you have not done it *with all your heart*.

SECTION VI.

Regeneration does not debar from the Supper.

It is thought by some that the doctrine of regeneration by the Holy Ghost, lies in the way of sinners coming to this Gospel Feast. Regeneration is the term which expresses the work that God performs on the heart of man, when he becomes a new creature. In becoming new creatures, men "work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, while God works in them to will and to do, of his good pleasure." In becoming pious, it is enough for men to do *their own work*. They are not required to do *God's work*. He is always ready to do that himself. "As many as *receive Christ*, to them he gives power, (or right, or privilege,) to become the sons of God, even to them *that believe on his name* : which are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, *but of God*." When people thus receive Christ, by believing on his name, they *are* regenerated, they *are* new creatures. They now love and obey God. They now trust in Christ alone for salvation. They now hate sin, and forsake the ways of sin. They now cheerfully accept the

invitation, and come to the great Supper. Let sinners, then, repent that they have sinned against the Holy Sovereign of the universe, and let them *believe in the Lord Jesus Christ* with all their heart; let them thus do what they are required to do, and what they ought to do, and they will not find the doctrine of regeneration hindering them, in the least, from coming to the great Supper. Try it, my dear reader, *try it*.

SECTION VII.

Evil men and Satan cannot keep others from the Supper.

It may be thought that wicked men, and the great adversary, can prevent sinners coming to the Gospel Feast. If they *could* prevent men from becoming pious, none would ever become such. The devil is constantly walking about, seeking whom he may devour. If he had malignity enough to seduce and ruin our first parents, we may know that he will do his utmost to ruin all their posterity. He does what he can to make men satisfied with their present

state and character. He persuades them that their morality is religion enough : that they can do without the Gospel Supper ; that they are " rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing." He sows " tares among the wheat," and " catches away the good seed of the word," which has been sown on the ears of mankind. " We are not ignorant of his devices." But though Satan's influence is great, it is not irresistible. "*Resist the devil,*" said the Apostle, " and he will flee from you." He can only *tempt*. He cannot *force*. A disposition to obey the Lord Jesus Christ, and a firm determination to live a life of prayer, can break through all the obstacles, which wicked men and devils are capable of interposing between the sinner and salvation.

Wicked beings may persecute, and threaten those who desire salvation, and may imprison the body, and put it upon the rack, and burn it ; but when they have killed the body, they have gone to the limit of their power. The soul can serve God and enjoy his smiles, notwithstanding all the opposition of earth and hell.

If these seven obstacles, which have been examined in the foregoing sections of this chapter,

may be overcome, and the sinner, notwithstanding them, enjoy the Gospel Supper, we may safely conclude that there are no insurmountable obstacles in his way. Now, if there are no such obstacles in the way of sinners to prevent their coming to the full enjoyment of Gospel blessings, *why do they not all come?*

SECTION VIII.

Men need the provisions of the Great Supper.

THE reason all men do not accept the invitation to the Supper, is not because they do not stand in need of these provisions. Men are fallen, depraved, and ruined creatures. Every part of man, soul and body, shows signs of degeneracy. All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. In consequence of sin, man *cannot*, by any of his doings, regain the innocence of our race before the fall. The law looks upon him as a transgressor, and pronounces him accursed. He must perish, for all that *he* can do to satisfy the law. He is represented in the Bible as being utterly unable to save himself from the curse of the law—as

unable to do it, as the new-born infant is to live and thrive, when it has been cast out into the open field, and abandoned to its destiny. Men are represented as poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked, and entirely under the power of a loathsome disease. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint : from the sole of the foot, even unto the head, there is no soundness ; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores." The Son of God saw the poverty, and misery, and utter helplessness of mankind. He saw their inability to provide for, or to take care of themselves. It was *then* that his eye pitied them, and his arm brought salvation. He said unto them : "*Live*, yea, he said unto them, *LIVE, for I have found a ransom.*" If men do not share in the blessings of this great Supper, *they must inevitably perish.* They are in pressing need of its provisions. They are absolutely and entirely dependent on *charity*—on the unmerited bounty of Christ. The reason, therefore, that they do not all come, and partake of the rich provisions of the Gospel Feast, is not, that they are not in needy circumstances ; for they owe ten thousand talents, and have nothing to pay.

O, my impenitent reader, do realize that you

are *sick*, and need Christ for your Physician ; that you are *poor*, and need the merits of Christ to make you rich ; that you are *blind*, and need the eye-salve of the Gospel to give you sight ; that you are *wretched*, and need the pardoning mercy of God to make you happy ; that you are *starving*, and need the provisions of the great Supper to supply your wants. To *feel your necessities*, is the first step towards having them supplied. Contemplate your state, *realize* your condition, and *hasten to Christ* for the mercy you need.

SECTION IX.

A want of room keeps none away.

THE reason sinners do not all come to the great Supper, is not a want of room at the table. It would be doing injustice to the Maker of the feast, to suppose that he invites more guests than he is prepared to accommodate. It would manifest an insincerity in the invitation, which would be exceedingly derogatory to his character. What is the fact in the case, as stated in the account ? Why, after the servant

had brought in all that he could induce to come, from the streets and lanes of the city, he informed his Master that there was yet room. So in the Gospel; though multitudes have been brought into the kingdom of heaven, yet there is room. There is room enough at this great Supper, for every son and daughter of Adam. None has been constrained to go away, after coming, for want of room. None will ever be turned away on that account. Christ has given assurance that all who come to his feast shall find a place. This is his language: "*Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.*" My reader, have you tried to find a seat at the Gospel Supper? Have you been to Christ, and asked him to give you a place at his table? Do not conclude that there is not room enough for you, without first making a thorough trial. *Come and see.*

SECTION X.

No want of provisions.

SOME might fear, from the consideration that so many are invited, that the provisions will not hold out, and they may hesitate about coming

on that account. As God, in his providence, has furnished a sufficiency of food for *all* men, (though some may starve themselves to death,) so, in his grace, He has made ample provisions for the spiritual wants of all mankind—has given his Son to taste death *for every man*, to be “a propitiation for the sins of *the whole world*.” How can Christ be called “*the Saviour of all men*,” if he has not rendered salvation possible for all men? How can He be the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of *the world*, if he has not made an *atonement* sufficient, in its provisions, for the whole human race? Where the Apostle says: “If Christ died for *all*, then were all dead;” does he not more than intimate, that Christ has made an atonement for *all who are dead* in sin, that is, for *all men*?

There is no deficiency in the provisions of the Gospel. The prodigal utters the truth, “In my Father’s house is *bread enough and to spare*. Why then do any stay away, and perish for want of provisions.

“The happy gates of Gospel grace
Stand open night and day;
Lord, we are come to seek supplies,
And drive our wants away.”

SECTION XI.

None stay away for want of an invitation.

IN most communities, men wait for an invitation, before they feel themselves authorized to go, and take supper with others. Those who stay away from the great Gospel Supper, cannot plead the want of an invitation. By turning back to Chapter V. of this little book, you will see that *all men*, who live in Gospel lands, are invited. "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst, Come; and *whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.*" If any, therefore, do not come to this feast, the reason is not, that they have not been sincerely invited.

Reader, though you have had many kind invitations before, we would again, in the name of the great Master, entreat you to come and share these rich blessings with us. Come, taste and see that the Lord is good.

SECTION XII.

All would be welcomed to the Supper.

NEITHER is it the reason, why all sinners do not come to the Great Supper of the Gospel, that they would not be received with a hearty welcome, if they would come. Let men be ever so unworthy, in themselves ; let them have been the most cruel and polluted ; let them have lived long in the ways of sin ; if they can *now* be induced to break off their sins by righteousness, and accept the invitation to this feast, they will not be despised, or rejected, in consequence of their previous character or habits. As proof of this, look at a bloody Menasseh, a polluted Mary Magdalene, and a persecuting Saul of Tarsus. “ There is *joy*, in heaven ; *joy*, among the angels, when one sinner repenteth.” When the debased, and licentious, and ungrateful prodigal, came to himself, and returned to his father, did the father drive him from his house with reproachful upbraidings ? No ; “ while he was yet a great way off, the father saw him and had compassion on him, and *ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.*” And this was not all ; he said to his servants :

“Bring forth the best robe and put it on him ; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet ; and bring hither the fatted calf and kill it ; and let us eat and be merry, for this my son was dead, and is alive again ; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.” The three parables, in the 15th chapter of Luke, were all spoken to illustrate the joy of holy beings at the repentance of sinners ; at the sight of the guilty and unworthy coming to the Gospel Supper. What was the joy of those concerned, on *finding* the lost sheep, and the lost money, and the lost son ! Well, this joy represents the feelings of God and holy beings, on seeing sinners accept the invitation to this great feast. Our Heavenly Father is ready to bid every sinner a cordial welcome, who will come to this Supper, which his Son has provided. The blessed Saviour is rejoiced at every new instance of conversion ; for, in it he sees “the travail of his soul, and is satisfied.” The Holy Spirit is gratified, whenever his efforts to induce sinners to accept of Christ and his Gospel, are successful. Angels are elevated with new joy, when they behold any human being feasting upon the provisions of mercy. And sure we are that nothing affords the people of

God greater satisfaction than the sight of sinners flocking to Christ for salvation. Dr. Watts has very happily expressed the universal joy of holy beings, at the repentance of a sinner, in the following hymn :

“ With joy the FATHER doth approve
The fruit of his eternal love ;
The SON, with joy, looks down, and sees
The purchase of his agonies.
The SPIRIT takes delight to view
The holy soul He formed anew ;
And *saints* and *angels* join to sing
The growing empire of their King.”

Reader, will you not help forward this tide of joy among holy beings, by now seeking the Lord, with all your heart ? Say, Yes ; and do it.

SECTION XIII.

Sinners stay away from the feast for want of appetite.

IF all things are ready, as we have seen in Chapter VII. of this little book, and if none of the obstacles, which we have been examining in the Sections of this Chapter, prevents men

from coming to the Gospel Supper, *why is it* that all sinners, who hear the invitations of the Great Master, do not come ?

One reason why all sinners do not come to this feast of love, is, that they have *no appetite* for its provisions. The Master has said : "Blessed are they, which do *hunger* and *thirst* after righteousness ; for they shall be filled." But unconverted men do not thus hunger and thirst. Though *starving* for want of the provisions of this Supper, yet, they feel full, and in need of nothing. Though actually "poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked," yet they *feel* that they are "rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." As long as men do not feel themselves to be *sinners*, Christ has no attractions for them. They look upon him as "a root out of dry ground, which hath no form or comeliness." As long as they do not feel their need of the Gospel, there is no prospect that they will accept of its invitations. They never can be induced to come to the great Supper, unless they first see and feel their need of it. The situation, therefore, of those, who have no realizing sense of their perishing condition, without an interest in Christ, is truly alarming. Dying

with hunger, and yet no appetite ! Sick unto death, and yet see no need of a physician ! Reader, is this your situation ? If so, be alarmed for yourself.

SECTION XIV.

Sinners are unwilling TO HAVE an appetite for this Supper.

ANOTHER reason why sinners stay away from the Gospel Feast, is *their unwillingness to create an appetite for it*. When men have no appetite, but want one, for the meat that perisheth, they take something to *create* an appetite. Not so with those who need spiritual food, but have no appetite for it. Though sinners have no relish for divine things—for the provisions of the Gospel—yet, instead of using means to *provoke* an appetite, they rather strive to destroy what inclination they have for Gospel food. They cry, “Peace, Peace,” to themselves, and endeavour to feel that they are in no danger. If they cannot succeed in quieting all their apprehensions, in regard to their state and prospects; if the Holy Spirit strives to convince

them of sin, they use their best efforts to grieve him away. When their consciences become uneasy, and they see that they must *repent* or *perish*—that they must come to the Gospel Supper, or *starve*—instead of encouraging these feelings in themselves and others, they strive to destroy them. This they do by cavilling at the truth of God ; or, by indulging in trifling conversation ; or, by staying away from those meetings where the truth is plainly preached ; or, by reading novels, or other books and papers, which they ought not to read under such circumstances, if ever ; or, by refusing to pray when they feel it to be a duty ; or, by neglecting to tell their feelings to their minister, or some other Christian friend, who would give them suitable advice, and pray for them ; or, by refusing to repent of, and forsake, all their sins, and evil ways ; or, by refusing to take a stand on the Lord's side, and thus manifest that they are not ashamed of Christ ; or, by their want of decision of character ; in a word, by not being willing to forsake *all that they have*, and to come in haste to the great Supper of the Gospel. This unwillingness to create an appetite, and this desire to destroy what appetite sinners have for the Gospel, our divine Saviour

speaks of as follows : “ *Every one that doeth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.*” Stephen asserts the same thing, when he says, “ *Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost.*”

Now, as long as sinners have no appetite for this feast, and are *unwilling* to have an appetite created, it is not to be expected that they will come to it, though ever so kindly invited. And my dear impenitent reader, is this not your case? How long shall it be so with you? You may soon die, and perish forever, for want of this Supper which you are now slighting. *Look to it.*

SECTION XV.

Sinners do not like the terms of admission.

ANOTHER reason why sinners will not come to this great Supper, is, that they do not like the *terms* on which guests are received. The Great Master, who has provided the feast, wishes to have every thing done decently and in order. That things may be thus conducted, He has procured a set of uniform for the guests to wear, and made certain very reasonable conditions

for the guests to comply with. In order, therefore, to enjoy the dainties of this Supper, those invited must put on the wedding garment, and follow the directions of the Master. But sinners are so well pleased with their own garments, that it is with difficulty they can be induced to change them for the one provided for the occasion. And they do not like to come under the dictation of the Master. All that come to the Supper are required to repent of their sins as committed against God ; to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with all the heart ; to live a life of prayer ; to forsake all sinful practices ; to live soberly, righteously and godly in the world ; to deny themselves and take up their cross and follow Christ ; to make restitution, if possible, where justice demands ; to come out from the world and be separate ; to confess Christ before men ; to do as they would be done by ; to work in the Master's vineyard continually ; and to unite with the friends of the Master in every good cause. Now, these terms of admission are not agreeable to unholy beings, and therefore unconverted men will not comply with them, and thus come to this feast. If they could enjoy the comforts of the Supper, without being obliged to submit to such humil-

iating conditions, they would like it. And sometimes it is the case that persons think themselves *willing* to come to this feast, when they are, in fact, only willing to *enjoy the provisions*. Such a willingness every *selfish* man, and every *depraved* being in the universe, possesses. All are willing to be *happy*, but all are *not* willing to *serve God and be holy*. As soon as men are really *willing* to come to the Gospel Supper *as it is*, they do immediately come. "The willing and obedient shall eat the good of the land."

Reader, are you as willing to *obey Christ* as you are to be happy? *Religion* is obedience to Christ. "He became the author of eternal salvation *to all them that obey him*." If then you desire eternal salvation, *obey Christ*, and you will have it.

SECTION XVI.

Sinners do not like God's people.

ANOTHER reason why many do not come to this feast, is, that they do not like those who have accepted the invitation, and who have

put on the wedding garment. After the Fall, God said to the serpent, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between *thy seed and her seed.*" This enmity has existed ever since, and wicked men have borne a mortal hatred to those, who have complied with the terms of this feast, and who have thus separated themselves from the ungodly. Sometimes wicked men are honest enough to acknowledge their hatred to God's people. This was the case with king Ahab. He acknowledged that he hated the prophet Micaiah, who was a devoted man of God. Whether unconverted men *see* their own enmity to Christians or not, whether they acknowledge it or not, the blessed Master assured us of its existence. He said to those who had come to the Gospel Supper, "*Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake.*" And again he says, "Blessed are ye when *men shall hate you*, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake." And again he said, "If the world *hate you*, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye, are not of the world, but I have chosen you

out of the world, *therefore* the world hateth you." In prayer to the Father, the Saviour says of his followers, "*The world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.*"

We see, therefore, it is no new thing, and no strange thing, for those who will not come to the Gospel feast, to hate those who do come. This being the case, it is no wonder that such persons do not come to this great Supper. Who likes to go into the company of those whom he hates? As long, therefore, as sinners continue to hate God's people, so long they will stay away from the Gospel feast. There must be a likeness of character and habits before they can enjoy each other's society. Either Christians must lay aside their wedding garments—the peculiarities of religion—or else sinners must put on *their* wedding garments—must give up their hatred to God's people, and become lovers of that which is good—or there can be no fellowship between them; they must remain separate, in order to any enjoyment on either side. It is certain, therefore, that sinners will never consent to come to the great Supper till they cease to hate Christians.

Reader, if God loves his people as the apple of his eye, why cannot *you* love *them*? He is the best judge of what is lovely.

SECTION XVII.

Sinners do not love God.

ANOTHER reason why the unconverted do not come to the Gospel feast, is, that they are not on good terms with the Master. If men are invited by one of their fellow creatures to attend a party, or to take tea with him, they are not likely to accept the invitation, unless they are pleased with him. We do not like to pay our respects to those whom we hate. As unconverted men are "*haters of God*," (Rom. i. 30,) and "*hate both the Father and the Son*," (John 15. 23, 25,) and possess a "*carnal mind, which is enmity against God*," (Rom. viii. 7,) it is evident that, (so long as they cherish such feelings,) they will not come to the great Supper, which the Son of God has provided. Sinners may even feel their need of Gospel blessings; may be assured that these blessings are offered freely to all; may be urged by all the motives drawn

from the comforts of the feast on the one hand, and by all the motives drawn from the miseries of starvation on the other; still, if they will not give up their hatred of God, his law and government—and their hatred of his sovereignty as manifested in his disposal of all things and all events—they can never be induced to come to the great Supper of the Gospel. If sinners will first cease to hate God and religion, and give their affections to Christ, they will then gladly enjoy familiar intercourse with him, and come to his feast of love.

Reader, what are *your* feelings towards God and his government? “I pray you, in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.”

SECTION XVIII.

Sinners think they can do without the Gospel Supper.

SOME men do not come to this feast, because they think that they can do without it. They are making provisions for themselves, which they seem to suppose will answer every purpose. They seem to think it beneath *their* dignity to comply with the terms of this Sup-

per, when they have done so much to provide for themselves. They are ready to ask, "Must *we*, who are so moral and good, *be born again* to fit us for this feast? Must *we*, who have done so much good in the world, look upon all our doings as *worthless*, as to preparing us for this Supper? Must *we*, who are rich and increased with goods, become *beggars*, in order to be partakers of Gospel blessings? Must *we* be wholly indebted to another for a wedding garment, and a Supper? Let it never be said that *we* have submitted to any such humiliating terms." The *sentiment* of this language is often felt by the self-righteous moralist. He seems to suppose that *his good deeds* will answer the same purpose to him, that the Gospel Supper does to those who are *great sinners*. He does not seem to agree with the apostle Paul, who has *asserted* and *proved* that *no sinner, great or small*, can be justified in God's sight by his good deeds, or by his morality, or by the works of the law. And lest some men should say, "I shall be justified, for *I have not sinned*," Paul proves conclusively that "*all have sinned*, and come short of the glory of God." Now, so long as these persons *think* that they can be saved without repentance, and

faith, and regeneration, they never will come to the Gospel Supper.

Reader, how is it with you? Are you depending on your native, or acquired goodness, for justification before God? Does the idea, that you are not as bad as many others, prevent your feeling your need of Christ, and your coming to him for life? I assure you, on the authority of the Master, that you *must feed on this* Supper, or *perish*; you must believe in Christ, or be damned. "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which *is not bread*, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Harken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is *good*, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."

SECTION XIX.

Some think ALL will enjoy the Supper unconditionally.

A portion of mankind, defer accepting the invitation to this feast, because they have imbibed the notion, that *all* men will ultimately enjoy its provisions, whether they comply with the terms or not. By waiting awhile, according to

their sentiments, they will gain admittance, without the trouble and expense of procuring tickets. They consider the terms of admission very disagreeable and oppressive. The terms which most annoy them, and which they hope to get round by waiting, are these : "Ye must be born again ;" "Except ye repent, ye shall perish ;" "He that believeth not, shall be damned ;" "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord ;" "Pray without ceasing ;" "Remember the Sabbath day *to keep it holy* ;" "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts ;" "Swear not at all ;" "Forsake all ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and live soberly, and righteously, and godly in the world." Now, as long as they have the idea, that all men will enjoy the feast alike, whether they comply with these terms or not, they will not be likely to comply. They do not believe, it would seem, that the Master of the feast will say to some who were bidden : "Ye shall not taste of my Supper." As long as they entertain these sentiments, they will not come to the feast of the Gospel, though urged by ten thousand motives.

Reader, be not deceived. Your eternal all is at stake.

SECTION XX.

Some delay coming, because they hope the Supper will be kept waiting for them.

OTHERS, again, neglect or delay coming to the Gospel feast, because they hope that, as all things are *now* ready, they will continue to be ready and waiting some time longer, before the door will be finally closed. Because they think it probable that they shall live a few years longer, they cannot be persuaded to come *now*. They know that they need the Supper; they are not among those who see insurmountable obstacles, in the way of their coming to it; they admit there is room for them; they know that they have been often invited; they do not doubt, but they should be made welcome, if they come; they think they are willing to *feel* their need; they do not object to the terms of admission; they do not feel any particular dislike to those who have come to the feast; they think they do not hate the Master; they are convinced that they cannot do without the Gospel Supper; they are not among those who believe that all will partake of this great feast; and yet, because they may, *possibly*, have an

opportunity of coming at a future time, they cannot be induced to come now.

O, my impenitent reader, is it *kind* to treat the blessed Saviour in this way? When he has provided salvation for you, at the cost of his own heart's blood, will you delay coming, at his invitation, and partaking of this great salvation? And will you delay, too, because he possibly may be so long suffering as to make you the offer of mercy again, at a future time, if you do not accept it now? Will you run the awful risk of *perishing eternally*, on the bare possibility, that you may find mercy at the eleventh hour, if you do slight it now? Remember, it is not said: Behold! *to-morrow* is the accepted time; but it is said: "Behold! *now* is the accepted time; Behold! *now* is the day of salvation;" "*To-day*, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart."

"Be wise *to-day*; 'tis madness to defer."

CHAPTER IX.

SINNERS EXCUSE THEMSELVES FOR NOT COMING TO THE GREAT SUPPER.

AFTER the oxen and the fatlings were killed, and the Supper was in readiness, and the servant sent out, at Supper-time, to say to them that were bidden : "Come, for all things are now ready," *what was his success ?* We might expect that all would make haste to come ; that all would say to the servant : "Tell your Master, we are greatly obliged to him for his kind invitation, and will take care to be there in season." But, instead of this, they all, with one consent, as though they had been together, for consultation, began to make excuse. Instead of wishing to *go*, they wished to *stay away*. Among all that had been bidden, not even *one* was ready to comply with the invitation. Here are the richest and best provisions of the universe offered to *poor, starving*, guilty creatures, and they all, as though by agreement, treating both the provisions, and him who provided

them, with the utmost indifference ! Be astonished, O heavens, at this ! The great God has made a costly feast, on purpose, for miserable, wretched men, and has kindly invited them to partake of it, without money, and without price, *but not a single individual* of them all, will deign to come to his feast, without omnipotent urging. They all were ready to ask to be excused. But let us not judge them too hastily. Possibly they had good excuses for not coming. What were their excuses ?

SECTION I.

A new purchase of land lay in the way.

THE *first* said to the servant, who brought him the invitation : "I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it ; I pray thee have me excused." God had so prospered this man, that he was adding farm to farm. And how does he manifest his gratitude for divine favours ? He shows his feelings to his kind Benefactor, by slighting his great and costly Supper. How would his excuse look, if it were enlarged into a regular prayer to God ? It

would read something after this manner : " O Lord, I am aware that thou hast been at great expense to provide a Supper for men, for me and others ; and I acknowledge, that I have been kindly and urgently invited to come, and partake of it ; but, Lord, I don't see how I can well command time enough to accept your invitation. Thou, Lord, hast given me so much worldly prosperity, that I have no time for religion. I acknowledge that I ought to pray in my family, and attend prayer meetings, but thou hast given ' me so much to take care of, that I have no time. I ought to spend some time every day in my closet, and in reading the Bible, and in conversing on the subject of religion ; but I cannot do it, because my farm, or store, or shop, or mill, or some other branch of business, with which thou hast entrusted me, demands my whole attention. I ought to be a true Christian, and live in such a manner that I might be continually feasting on the Great Supper of the Gospel, and enjoying thy perpetual smiles, but thou hast recently prospered me so much, that I had some spare money, which I have just been laying out for a piece of ground, and it is necessary that I should now go and see what sort of bargain I have made. I pray

thee, therefore, excuse me for not coming to your great Supper."

O, what an excuse! How unpious! How God-provoking! Just as though he could not defer seeing his new purchase till another day!

Reader, Be careful that no worldly consideration keep you from Christ.

SECTION II.

Oxen a hindrance.

PERHAPS the excuses of the others were better? Let us examine the next: "And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them; I pray thee have me excused." The nature of this excuse is much like the first. Property comes in the way of God's service. O, what a blessing to be poor, and what a calamity to be rich! The poor man has no piece of ground, or drove of oxen, to keep him from the Gospel Supper. Our Saviour says: "Blessed are the poor." The poor have the Gospel preached to them; they are more likely to go and hear preaching, than the rich; and they are, generally, more ready to embrace the offers of mercy, than the rich. "God hath

chosen the poor of this world, to be *rich in faith*, and heirs of his kingdom." Why do not those persons, to whom the Giver of all mercies has committed property, learn to employ themselves, and their property, too, in his service? Property is a loan from the Almighty, to be repaid with interest. And if the heart of man was not set on the creature—property, more than on the Creator, his piece of ground, his oxen, or any other kind of property, would not keep him from embracing the Gospel, and partaking of this Great Supper.

But, taking men as they are by nature, depraved, selfish beings; property, to any considerable amount, is a dangerous boon. Considering how prone men are to love the world, and the things of the world, we cannot wonder at our Saviour's exclamation: "How hardly shall they that have riches, enter into the kingdom of heaven!" When the disciples expressed their surprise at Christ's remark, and asked: "Who, then, can be saved?" he answered, that "With men, it is impossible; but not with God, for with God, all things are possible."

The difficulty with the rich is, that they are too apt to *trust in their riches*. They are liable to feel a kind of independence, which is in-

consistent with that child-like spirit, which we must possess, if we would enter heaven. In regard to the excuses which these men offered, every one must see that it could not have been of such infinite importance, that they should see their new bought land, or try their newly-purchased oxen, on that very day. If they had been at all disposed to attend this glorious banquet, they could easily have deferred these unimportant matters till another time. They so clearly betrayed a want of disposition to please and gratify the Master of the Feast, that he took their excuses as an insult. Why were not these men honest enough to tell the servant that they had no wish to take Supper with his Master? They played the hypocrite. So does almost every person, who pretends to offer excuses for not being a Christian.

It may be so with you, dear reader. When you are urged to become a Christian, if, instead of saying with all your heart, "*I will now serve the Lord,*" and doing it, you have reasons to give why you are not serving him; these reasons show that you have no mind, or disposition to serve him. For, if you had a mind to serve the Lord, you would at once commence serving him. *Try it.*

SECTION III.

A wife is a hindrance.

Let us see if the third had not a better excuse. He said, "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come." It is too often the case, that young people attend public worship far more punctually before they are married, than they do afterwards. Is it necessary that it should be so? Do they not need the blessing of God as much after, as before their marriage? Is it true, that when a man has married a wife he cannot come? But the excuse, which we are considering, is not so much for neglecting religious meetings, as it is for neglecting to come to Christ for salvation. And are people, when they get *married*, excusable for not serving God? Especially, are *newly married* people freed from obligations to fear God and keep his commandments? Surely they are *not* freed from such obligations. There is not a day or an hour of man's life, either before or after marriage, when he is not bound to love God with all his heart, and to serve him in sincerity and in truth. And if men who are *married* cannot serve God as well as those who are *not* married,

surely it is better not to marry. But Solomon assures us, that "he that getteth a wife, getteth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord." This shows that *married* people are under *special* obligations to love and serve the Lord. It is therefore, *not true*, that a man's getting married puts it out of his power to come to the Gospel feast. And for a man under these circumstances, or under any other circumstances in which God shall place him, to pretend that he *cannot* be a Christian—*cannot* serve the Lord—*cannot* do his duty, is exceedingly provoking to God, and dangerous to his own soul. We have now examined the excuses which were made by those who were invited to the Supper. But there are many other excuses, which men are in the habit of making when they are urged to become Christians. In the following sections we will examine some of them.

SECTION IV.

I do not know that the Bible is true.

As the minister of Jesus attempts to induce men to fear God, and keep his commandments, one tries to ease his own conscience by saying,

"I don't know that the Bible is God's word." To such an one I would say, Unless you are quite sure that the Scriptures were *not* given by divine inspiration, you will do well to examine their claims to being God's holy Book of truth. If a document were placed in your hands, purporting to be a *will* conveying a vast amount of property to yourself and others, who would comply with certain conditions therein specified, would you not carefully examine its claims to authenticity? Would you not read the document through, with the utmost carefulness and attention? Would you not examine all accessible evidences, *internal* and *external*, that it was written by the individual whose name it bears? And would not your efforts, to satisfy your mind of its authenticity, be proportioned to the interest you had in it, if it should prove to be true? Well, such a document is the Bible. It is the last *will* and *testament* of the Lord Jesus Christ, conveying "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away," to all those who believe and obey the truth. Have you examined all the evidences, within your reach, in favour of the divine authenticity of the Bible? Have you particularly noticed the purity of its moral precepts,

the perfect harmony of all its parts, the elevation of its style, and the sublimity of its thoughts? Have you weighed the evidences of its being a divine revelation, which crowd around you as you contemplate its well-attested miracles, and its numerous prophecies, and their exact fulfilment? Have you marked the wonderful and happy change, which the Bible, carefully read and obeyed, has always produced in nations, in communities, and in individuals? Have you ever inquired the cause of the mighty difference, in the character and habits of the people of England, at the present time, from what they were previous to the introduction of Christianity into that country? Have you ever satisfied your own mind, as to what produced such a sudden and wonderful change in the persecuting Saul of Tarsus? Have you not known of similar changes in some of your acquaintances? How do you account for these salutary effects, produced by Christianity, if the Bible, and the influence which accompanies it, are not divine?

Again, permit me to ask, have *you* ever read the Bible *through*? If you have, did you do it with an earnest desire to find out whether it is God's word or not? And if you have not read

it through, are you wise to entertain doubts about its authenticity, especially, when there is more evidence of its authenticity, than there is of the authenticity of any other ancient book? I entreat you to stop and think, before you venture any nearer the fatal gulf of infidelity. If the Bible is true, the Christian is safe, while the unconverted sinner is in the utmost danger. If the Bible is true, all true Christians will soon be in heaven, and all unbelievers will soon be in hell. And if the Bible is not true, the unbeliever gains nothing by his unbelief, and the Christian loses nothing by his faith in Christ. Is it not, therefore, a dictate of prudence, to become a sincere and devoted Christian? There is no risk in that, while there is a fearful risk in living in sin.

SECTION V.

Universalism a hindrance to salvation.

Another person, when urged to repent and believe the Gospel, meets the servant of Christ with the excuse, "I am disposed to think that all men will finally be saved." I would use the following language with such a person :

On what is your impression founded, that all will be saved? Is it because you think all men are living in holy obedience to Christ? Paul says that Christ has become "the author of eternal salvation unto *all them that obey him.*" Can you think that the swearer, the Sabbath-breaker, the drunkard, the murderer, the thief, the libertine, the prayerless, the impenitent, the unbeliever, the neglecter of salvation, or the idolator, *obeys Christ*? If these do not obey Christ, and if Christ is the author of salvation to only such as obey him, how can you think that Christ will give eternal salvation to these? Again, Paul says that *without holiness* no man can see the Lord. Now, is it because you think all men are *holy*, that you are disposed to believe they will all be saved? A *holy* being hates sin and avoids it as an abominable thing which is hateful to God and all good men. No one can think that such as allow themselves to take the name of God in vain, or to visit scenes of debauchery, or to commit adultery, or to wrong and oppress their fellow men, are *holy*. How then can you suppose that such will be saved? But perhaps you think that all will be saved because *God is merciful*. As to God's being *merciful*, there is no doubt. The *life* of every human

being, and all the *blessings* which make life comfortable, are undeniable evidences of God's mercy. But to whom is the mercy of God pledged? Is it pledged to men without regard to their moral character? Surely not. "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon *them that fear him.*" But divine truth assures us that the wicked "have *no fear of God before their eyes,*" and of course God's mercy is not pledged to them. And if the mercy of God did not prevent his sweeping off the guilty inhabitants of the old world with a flood, and did not prevent his overthrowing Sodom and Gomorrah with a shower of fire and brimstone, we have no reason to conclude that it will prevent his turning the wicked into hell.

Why then do you think that all will enter heaven? Have you not read what our divine Saviour said on this subject, in Luke xiii. 24: "*Many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able?*" And he makes this declaration, as a reason why men should *strive* to enter in. Now, if many will not be able to enter heaven, even though they *seek to do it*, how can you think that *all* will be able to enter?

Again, have you forgotten that Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, are set forth as an example, *suffering the vengeance of eternal fire*? If Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim, are suffering in eternal fire, they, of course, cannot, to all eternity, enter heaven. And if they, and the imprisoned spirits of the inhabitants of the old world, *are not saved*, may not others also fail of salvation?

Again, have you not often read of those who sin against the Holy Ghost? If what is said in regard to such is not fresh in your mind, just turn to Mark iii. 28, 29, 30: "But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost, *hath never forgiveness*, but is in danger of eternal damnation." Here we have the declaration of him who cannot lie, that the scribes, who said, Christ hath an unclean spirit, "*will never have forgiveness*, and of course will never enter heaven. You see therefore that the Bible plainly teaches that some of mankind *will not be saved*. But perhaps you think that *you do not deserve* eternal punishment, and that, therefore, God, as a *just* Being, will not doom you to suffer it. Are you, as a party interested in this matter, qualified to decide how much punishment you deserve, or how much mischief in God's universe

your sins have a tendency to produce? The Great Lawgiver and Judge has expressed his judgment on this point. He says, "The wages of sin is *death*;" in opposition, or, rather, in contrast with "*eternal life*," which is God's free gift to the believer. Here one is just as long and just as broad as the other; for one is a deliverance or reprieve from the other. As the reprieve is *eternal*, the death from which it delivers is *eternal*. And as God has decided that "the *soul* that sinneth *shall die*;"—"that the wages of sin is *death*;"—that the sinner "shall be punished with *everlasting destruction*;"—that those on the left hand of Christ in the judgment "shall go away into everlasting punishment;"—we ought to be too modest, and too diffident of our own judgment, to undertake to say that God threatens us for our sins *more than we deserve*. In other words, we ought to be careful how we say that we do not deserve everlasting punishment. But here is another consideration which ought to have influence; namely, just as long as you believe and feel that you are not deserving eternal punishment, you will treat with neglect or contempt the offers of pardon and eternal life presented in the Gospel. Those offers are tendered as a deliver-

ance from *deserved* punishment. If one does not feel that he deserves punishment, he will not *ask* for pardon. This was the case with Governor Dorr of Rhode Island. And it is so with every sinner. He never sincerely asks God to pardon his sins, unless he feels that he *has* sinned, and deserves punishment. And as pardon is not granted unless it is asked for, (Luke xi. 9, 10,) no sinner receives pardon unless he feels his ill-desert enough to lead him to ask pardon. And as *you will not ask* for pardon unless you *feel* that you have sinned, and deserve punishment, of course you will *never receive* it till you thus feel. So no one will cheerfully ask, or joyfully receive, pardon for a *greater offence* than he feels that he has committed. If the criminal feels that his offence deserves *only two years'* imprisonment, he will not ask, or thankfully receive, pardon for an offence which deserves *thirty years'* imprisonment. And as the gracious offers of the Gospel present *eternal life*, or *eternal salvation*, as a PARDON to the guilty children of men who will humbly ask and joyfully receive it, you will not thankfully accept this precious gift of God unless you feel that your damnation would be just. For, if you feel that you deserve *only*

a *little* suffering, or only a *limited* punishment, you will not cheerfully ask, or thankfully accept pardon for offences which *deserve*, and against which God threatens **ETERNAL damnation**. Instead of weighing the desert of sin by your own partial scales, would it not be wiser and safer to go to the Bible, and form your opinion of the nature and desert of sin from God's threatenings against transgressors; from the effect of sin on the angels who kept not their first estate; from the effects sin has produced in this world, where it has made the whole creation groan and travail in pain; and from the agonies and blood of the dying Son of God? Who, that contemplates the hateful and debasing and ruinous nature of sin, and its fearful effects in God's universe, does not see that it is an abominable thing, which good beings cannot but loathe and abhor? And who, that reflects that nothing short of the obedience and death of the Lord Jesus Christ could render it consistent for God to pardon sin, and save the sinner who believeth, can doubt that sin is a tremendous evil, and that the sinner deserves a tremendous punishment?

But perhaps you are ready to say, "I think all will be saved, because in my opinion all

men suffer what their sins deserve *in this life.*" Will you be so good as to turn to the xxi. of Job, and to the lxxiii. Psalm, and *read them carefully.* Can you think, when the people of the old world, and the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, were so wicked that God swept them off *suddenly* for their sins, that they were punished in this world *as much as they deserved*; and that Noah and Lot—those only pious persons—suffered *no more than they deserved*? Can you think that the pirate, who has murdered a hundred innocent persons, and is himself killed *instantly*, in the act of murder, has suffered all he deserves? Can you think that the Spanish Inquisitors, who had spent years in torturing to death innocent and pious persons, and were cut off in the midst of their crimes, suffered *as much as they deserved* in this life, and that their innocent and pious victims suffered *no more than they deserved*? All observation and experience deny that men are dealt with *here* according to their deserts. Besides, if all men are saved, and saved on account of having suffered what their sins deserve, then they are *not saved by grace, through faith*, and their salvation is *of themselves*, and *not the gift of God.* What grace

can there be in letting a man out of prison after he has suffered what the law demands? He can *demand* deliverance as a *right*. So there can be *no grace* in saving a man from sin and hell, after he has suffered the penalty of the law. This scheme of saving men, is *not* the Gospel scheme. The Gospel asserts that salvation is *all of grace*—the free gift of God. This new scheme, therefore, (if it has any Gospel in it,) must be *another* Gospel. (Col. i. 6, 8.)

But perhaps you are of those who think that all will be *finally* saved, in consequence of having suffered the penalty of the law, though some of them will have to suffer a limited period in hell. I see several objections to this system. 1. It has no solid foundation in the Bible. There is not one text rightly interpreted, which affords any countenance to this theory. And the Bible, by teaching that this life is the only state of trial, is utterly opposed to this sentiment. Abraham assured the rich man (Luke xvi.) that he had, during his lifetime, *received his good things*, and that there could be *no passing* from hell to the abode of the blessed. Christ said, "The night cometh when no man can work." The labourers in

the vineyard continued at their work till evening, when they were called forward and paid. In the future state, "He that is unjust will be unjust still; and he that is filthy will be filthy still." 2. The idea, that men pay their own debt by their *sufferings*, either here or hereafter, makes their salvation a matter of debt—something to which they are entitled—and not a matter of unmerited, free grace. If any were saved by their sufferings, they would not cry "Grace, grace, to it," from the foundation to the top stone thereof. 3. This system has nothing of Christ in it. If men can pay their own debts, they need no substitute to pay for them. What has Christ to do in saving men from their sins, if they have to suffer themselves what their sins deserve? If "Christ has suffered for our sins, the *JUST for the unjust*," (1 Peter, iii. 18,) then how is it that men must suffer for their own sins? This would be giving justice *double pay*. And that system, which holds that God gave his Son to suffer *for our sins, and that God will punish every man for his own sins*, makes God infinitely unjust. All who go to heaven from our world, we are told in the Bible, will ascribe their salvation wholly to Christ. (Rev. v. 9.) "And

they sung a new song, saying, thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God *by thy blood* out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." Now, if any had redeemed themselves by their own sufferings, they could not join in singing this heavenly anthem.

But even if it were true that all men will finally be saved, (which we have seen is not the case,) would it be likely to do men any serious injury to become humble and consistent Christians? Would God, or other holy beings, be likely to love or respect them any the less? Would they be less useful in Church or state? Would they be less likely to be sober, industrious citizens? Would they pay less regard to the Sabbath, or be less likely to take the name of God in vain? Would they afford less comfort to their relations and friends? Would they have less peace of mind, or be likely to read their Bible or pray less? Now my dear reader, unless you see something important to be gained by living without religion, and unless you see much to be lost by becoming a sincere Christian, I beseech you to cast in your lot with God's people. Come to the determination of

Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Multitudes, after having sought long and earnestly but without success to find happiness and peace in worldly good, have at length turned their feet into Wisdom's ways, and found that which they had sought in vain elsewhere. They have found that there is *peace* in believing. They have found that godliness is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." Leaving the future world, therefore, out of view, men lose nothing valuable, but gain much, by becoming Christians. Let me entreat you, then, to "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," to "strive to enter in at the strait gate," to "give diligence to make your calling and election sure," and *you* will be a *gainer*, whether all are saved or not.

"Attend the offered grace to-day,
Nor lose the blessing by delay."

SECTION VI.

The Moralists religion hinders his salvation.

WHEN the sentiment is repeated, that, "except a man be born again he cannot see the

kingdom of God," one man is ready to say, "My religion is to deal honestly and justly with all mankind, and to live a sober and moral life. If I do this, I trust God will accept of me." To such an one I would reply : as to honesty, sobriety and morality, they are all good and important as far as they go, and without them there can be no satisfactory evidence that the heart is right in the sight of God ; but in order to be justified by morality, or the works which the law requires, one must never have violated the law in a single instance. A creature, who has never deviated in the slightest degree from the demands of a law, is entitled to justification by that law, and has a right to consider himself and to be considered by others as *just* or *innocent*, according to the decisions of that law. Accordingly, most of the citizens of this state consider themselves and are considered by others as *just* or *justified*, when their conduct is *tried by*, or *compared with*, the laws of this state. It is on this ground also, that the angels, who have never violated the law of God, are justified by, and enjoy the protection and approbation of the divine law. They are entitled to all this. It is something which they can justly claim, in consequence of their undeviating

obedience to that law. But when a creature has once violated the law, he has, by such violation, thrown himself out from under its protection and approbation, and rendered himself justly exposed to its penalty. In the eye of the law, a man is as really *guilty*, and as truly exposed to punishment, who has sinned *but once*, as the man who goes on in a series of transgressions. After a being has once become a sinner, his course of conduct, whether good or evil, cannot change his relation to the law. He is looked upon, turn which way he will, as a *transgressor*, and as such he is to be treated. His after obedience, his reformatations and tears, and entreaties, cannot undo the wrong he has done. What would be thought of the man who had committed murder, if he should take the position, that, although he had broken the law and was convicted as a transgressor, yet it would be unjust for him to suffer the penalty of his crime, because he had been an obedient and peaceable citizen ever since he committed the murder, and he designed to continue such to the end of his life? Would any reasonable man think his position tenable? If an individual has violated the law, that is enough. The law does not ask the criminal what he is

now doing, or what he is *about* to do, but what *have* you done? *Have you sinned?* And as all men have sinned against the law of God, they all now stand related to the *penalty* and *not* to the *precept* of the law. God does not ask men, in dealing *legally* with them, how many times or in what ways they have violated his law, but *have you violated it at all?* **HAVE YOU SINNED?** And who is there on God's earth, that dare say that he has never sinned? never, in the least particular, gone contrary to the divine *will*, as made known by reason or revelation? And, my reader, as *you* "have sinned and come short of the glory of God," as well as all others, *you* are convicted as a transgressor. The law, which you have violated, must be satisfied. Heaven and earth will sooner pass away than one jot or tittle of the law fail. How can *you* satisfy the law? God says, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the law, to do them." Do what you will, turn which way you will, the law has no other language for you than that of curses. The law pays no regard to the sinner's tears, and sighs, and prayers, and works of law, and resolutions, and promises, and reformati^ons. The apostle Paul uses this language: "It is

evident that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God." "For by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." "And by him (Christ) *all that believe* are justified from all things from which *ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.*"

If men could be saved for their good works, their honesty and morality, their strict obedience to the divine law, the world has gained nothing by the obedience and death of *Christ*. For salvation was *possible* to all men *without* an atonement, according to that system; and it is *only* possible now *with* the atonement. That system holds that the amazing sufferings of Christ were unnecessary. It therefore, in effect, charges God with infinite cruelty in *bruising* his own well-beloved Son. If honesty and morality, and all the deeds which the law demands, could justify the sinner, then there was no necessity of God's setting forth his Son "to be a propitiation" for our sins, in order "to declare," or make manifest, "his righteousness," or his method of justifying sinners, "that he might be *just*, and the *justifier* of him which believeth in Jesus." That system of belief, therefore, which undertakes to save sinners by *the deeds of the law*, or by morality, is opposed

to both reason and revelation. The method by which God proposes to save sinners, is "*by GRACE, through faith in Christ Jesus.*" But if any man is saved by his obedience to the law, or by his morality and good works, his salvation is something to which he is entitled, and which is not *of grace*, but of works. If he is saved in that way, he has satisfied the demands of the law, and God is under legal obligations to justify and save him. Such a person is not included in the number to whom St. Paul says, "*By grace, are ye saved,*" through faith, and that not of yourselves—it is the gift of God." You see, therefore, that the system of religion by which the moralist proposes to be saved, is *not* the Gospel system.

Again, some people who may be placed in the general class with moralists, are expecting heaven because they are not *very wicked*—not as wicked, in their own estimation, as many others. They have never done any thing *very much out of the way*, and they have done many things which they apprehend are good and acceptable in the sight of the Lord ; and, besides all this, they are doing *better* than they used to do. They seem to think it would be unjust, and cruel, for God to cast them off, as

though they were *utterly deficient*, as to a preparation for the home of the redeemed. I would advise such persons to compare their morality, and their sentiments, and their righteousness, with the morality, and sentiments, and religion of the Pharisees. Can they pretend to stricter morality, or to praying more, or to being more punctilious in all the forms and external services of religion than the Pharisees were? And yet our blessed Saviour says, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter the kingdom of heaven." Christ said to Nicodemus, one of the best of the Pharisees, "Except a man be born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. *Ye must be born again.*" When the jailer at Philippi felt himself to be a lost and ruined sinner, and inquired, what he should do to be saved, what was Paul's answer? Was it, you must be honest and moral? You must commence a reformation? You must try to make yourself better? You must attend to religious duties? If you persevere in these things, you shall be saved? Paul told the jailer none of these things. But he did tell him *just what he must do*, and what, if he *immediately did it*,

would secure his salvation, even if he had died the next moment. Paul told him to do *what*, when done, always leads to obedience of heart and life to the will of God, and always ends in salvation. Mark his simple, plain, and easy answer to the trembling jailor, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.*" This was beginning at the right end of the subject. For where there is *faith*, there is a fountain which will send forth sweet waters. "Faith works by love, and purifies the heart." Faith leads to the cultivation of all the Christian graces, and to the practice of all the Christian virtues. Paul says, "Ye are *justified by faith.*" And our divine Lord has said, "He that *believeth* and is baptised shall be saved." Every system of religion, which does not commence with faith in Christ *as the only foundation*, is insufficient for the wants of mankind—can never save the soul of a sinful being, but will at last be like the spider's web, which cannot sustain the one who holds on to it. Good works, honesty and morality, justice and sobriety, patience and moderation, forbearance and kindness, are *virtues*, which will promote the happiness and comfort of those who cultivate them, and of the community in which

they are cultivated. It is the interest and duty, therefore, of all intelligent beings, to practise these moral virtues. But these things are to be commended and practised, *not as a religion which will of itself justify a sinner in God's sight*, but as something which is right and proper in itself, whether men are saved or not, and independent of our relation to the future world. Men ought all to obey the precepts of the moral law, and thus practise all the virtues of morality, whatever becomes of them in this world or the next. These things are right, but they do not constitute the *whole*, or even the *first* and *most essential element* of Gospel religion. They are not the *grounds* on which God can consistently save a *sinner*. We would, therefore, say to moralists, in regard to their good works, "These things ought ye to do, but not to leave the other," that is, *faith in Christ*, "undone." In the Christian system, God has joined *faith and works together*. A man may pretend that he has faith, or that he is a Christian, while he neglects the duties of morality and charity; but St. James informs us that "faith without works"—that is, *a faith which does not lead its possessor to perform good works*—"is dead;" is good for nothing,

is no better than the faith of devils, is *not the faith* which results in salvation. The faith which unites the soul to Christ, leads those who have it to imitate Christ—to possess the same self-denying and devoted mind which was in him, and, like him, ever to seek to do good to others. Though a man may be strictly moral without being truly pious, yet no man can be truly pious without being habitually moral.

Before dismissing the subject of morality, let me make one other remark. I have sometimes found persons who expected to be saved “because they were not very wicked, and did not deserve to be sent to hell, and because they had never,” as they said, “injured their fellow-creatures ;” while some of them were notorious drunkards, and swearers, and Sabbath-breakers, and oppressors, and licentious persons ; and others of them gave their countenance, to theatres and balls, and the circus, and trained their children to attend them, or even attended themselves. Any one who can believe that God will save men for such morality as this, can easily believe that God will save all men without regard to their conduct in this world. This description of moralists do, in effect, place every man’s inclination as the law which he is

to obey in order to be saved. And this is *infidelity* of the grossest kind. It is opposed to the whole Bible. It is opposed to reason and common sense. Nothing but a heart, which is deceitful above all things, and fully set in one to do evil, could ever prompt a man to resort to such excuses for not serving God, and coming to the Gospel Supper.

SECTION VII.

A cavil about original sin made a hinderance.

SOME people, when urged to repent and forsake their sins, are ready to inquire, "*How came I to be a sinner?*" To such I would reply, that it is not of so much importance to understand how you became a sinner, or the nature of original sin, as it is to understand how you may be saved from your sins. It is enough for your present purpose to *know* and *feel* that *you are a sinner*, because *you yourself* "*have sinned* and come short of the glory of God." You need have no fear that God will threaten or punish you more than *your own sins* deserve. Your concern, therefore, should

be to ascertain how you may escape the punishment which is due to you *as a transgressor of God's law*. While you are making no exertions to be delivered from the power and penalty of your sins, but are busying yourself with the inquiry, how you became a sinner, you remind us of a man perishing with cold. When overtaken by the woodman, he was sinking into death-slumbers, benumbed with frost, and the vital spark just ready to expire. "Rouse up," said the woodman, "you are perishing here with cold." The freezing man draws up his stiffened eyelids, and gazing upon his benefactor, exclaims, "How came I here in the snow? Who brought me here?" The other replies, "that is of no consequence to you now. You are perishing, and unless you soon wake up, you will be a dead man." "But no," says the dying wretch, "I must know how I came here before I make any exertions to get warm." And thus, instead of attempting to escape, he busies himself with useless inquiries about his situation, till death closes the scene. So, while God is proclaiming in your ears, "The soul that sinneth, *it shall die*;" and calling on you to repent, and saying, 'Except ye repent, ye shall likewise perish,'

is it not a dictate of prudence in you to inquire, "What must I do to be saved?" "How can I escape the damnation of hell?" "Can God's law be honoured, and the *sinner* be saved?" "Can God be *true* to his word, and *just* to the universe, and the sinner *not die*?" "Can justice be satisfied, and the sinner go unpunished?" These are questions which concern us far more than the one how we became sinners. And we see in the Bible that, through Christ, God *can* "be *just*, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." And now, before the slumber of spiritual death prove fatal to your soul, let me exhort you in the language of inspiration, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

SECTION VIII.

Too young to be a good Christian.

HERE is a child. When he is urged to seek the Lord, and to make religion his first and great concern, he replies, "I am so young, I fear that I should not hold out." I would ask

such an one, why do you fear that you should not hold out? Is it because you have heard others say that children and youth, who become hopefully pious, are not so likely to *persevere*, as older persons? Or, is it because you have seen *young* people, who profess religion, more irregular in their conduct and conversation than others? Now, taking into consideration the great cheerfulness, and the rapid flow of animal spirits. of youth and children, the temptations peculiar to their age, the great and criminal negligence of older and more experienced Christians, to watch over, and caution, and admonish them; and the large number of this description who profess a hope in Christ, it is wonderful that no more fall away than do. Yea, it is very doubtful whether a greater proportion of converts of this young and volatile age prove to have no religion, than of those who are apparently converted in more advanced life. And here let me remark, that those parents assume a fearful responsibility who keep back their children from joining the visible Church, (when they give satisfactory evidence of piety,) merely because the children are young. In many cases where this has been done, the little lambs, who were bleating for admittance

among the sheep in Christ's fold, have been discouraged and dejected, and finally scattered into the wilderness, if not destroyed, by him who "walketh about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." God can as well convert a child *in our day*, as he could Samuel and Josiah of old. And God can as readily convert a child as a man; and his grace is as sufficient to keep that child from apostacy and ruin, as it is to uphold the person of mature age. It is my deliberate opinion, formed after thirty years' experience in the Church, and after having laboured more or less in some forty revivals, that children *under fifteen* are as susceptible of rational conviction, and genuine conversion, as older persons; and that ministers and parents, and Sabbath-school teachers, are *criminal* for their practical scepticism on this subject.

But if other young people have dishonoured religion by their irregularity or apostacy, *you* are under no necessity of doing it. There are many youth, and even children, that hold on their way in the Lord's service, and are ornaments to the Church. These are the persons on whom you should look as examples worthy of imitation. If these can, and do continue to

serve and honour Christ, *you* can, and ought to do so too.

Do you find any thing in the Bible which discourages young people, or children, from commencing the service of God in the morning of life? Instead of finding discouragement for the young, in that sacred book, do you not there find even stronger inducements for youth to enter the Lord's vineyard, than for those of any other age? Do you not hear the voice of wisdom, coming forth from the inspired volume, and saying, "Remember now thy Creator *in the days of thy youth?*" "Doth not wisdom cry" in your ear, and are not these her cheering words, "I love them that love me, and *they that seek me early shall find me?*" And does not our blessed Saviour rebuke his disciples for discouraging children from coming to him; and does he not say, "Suffer *little children* to come unto me, and forbid them not, for *of such* is the kingdom of heaven?" Here are encouragements for the young, which are not held out to those of any other age.

Again, if you wish to do all the good you can in the world, you ought to put yourselves in the way of doing good as early as possible. Life is a day, and one hour after another of this

day is rapidly passing beyond your reach. Soon comes the *third* hour, or the middle of the forenoon; soon after that the *sixth* hour, or noon; then it is but a short period to the *ninth* hour, or the middle of the afternoon; and, before most people are ready for it, comes the *eleventh*, or closing hour of the day. Every hour is precious, and should see something accomplished for our heavenly Father. We ought always to bear in mind, that we were created "to glorify God and enjoy him for ever." If, therefore, we would answer the end of our creation, we should *begin* to glorify God in the *morning* of our existence. No time should be wasted in the vanities of childhood and youth. Life is too short to allow a single hour to be lost. You cannot glorify God, or please him, till you give him your heart. Hence he says to you, "My son, give me thy heart." To give your heart to God, is *to love him* with all your heart. This is the beginning of true religion. If you love God, you will seek to keep his commandments. You will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour. You will forsake your sins. You will pray, and keep the Sabbath, and obey your parents, and attend meeting, and read the

Bible, and seek to perform all Christian duties. If you become a Christian while young, you will have the longer time in which to do good ; and, of course, you can do far more good by entering the Lord's vineyard in the morning, and labouring all day in his service, than you could, if you put off entering the vineyard till middle life. A desire, therefore, to do as much good as possible for your heavenly Father, should lead you to devote yourself to his service without any delay.

But again, reflect, that though you may think yourself too young to be a Christian, *you are not too young to die* ; and, if you die in your sins, you are not too young to be cast into hell. Children and youth die as well as others. And they are sinners as well as others. And they cannot be saved without a new heart, any more than others. And now, is it wise, is it safe, to put off giving your heart to God till you are older ? Will God be pleased with your putting off ? Would you dare to kneel down before God and say, " O Lord, I am too young to love and serve thee. I want the privilege of living in a sinful state, and of disobeying thee a few years longer, before I can think of doing as thou requirest. I fear that if I should begin to build

while so young, I should not be able to finish. I pray thee, therefore, go thy way for this time, but when I am older, and find a convenient season, I will call for thee?" You would shudder to offer this prayer *in so many words*, but you do, in effect, offer it, every day you neglect to become a Christian.

Finally, let me tell you that the wish, which you now have, to put off beginning to serve God, if you indulge it, will constantly increase, and sear your conscience, and will prevent the preached Gospel, and other means of grace, doing you any good, and will discourage Christians in their labours and prayers for your salvation, and will provoke God to give you up to the inclinations of an evil heart, and thus will prove your eternal ruin. God has plainly said, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." Many have doubtless been given up of God, when young. Take heed, therefore, my young friend, lest this be the case with you, and you mourn at the last, saying, "how have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof!" Will you not, from this time, cry unto God, "My Father thou art the Guide of my youth?"

SECTION IX.

Religion would make me less happy.

Some people, when invited to become Christians, are ready to say, "I fear religion would destroy or greatly diminish my happiness." Let me ask such an one, Are you now happy? Does your mind enjoy peace and quietness when you suffer yourself to think of death, judgment, and eternity? After all your apparent cheerfulness and gayety, is there not a canker gnawing your soul, and filling you with anguish? If you think that *religion* would make you unhappy, you have an erroneous idea of it. It is the *want* of religion that makes men miserable. The soul without religion, is like a ship on the tempestuous ocean without helm or anchor. It is driven about, the sport of every wind and every wave. Are you the most happy when you go the farthest from what religion requires? Does it make you happy to get angry, or swear, or lie, or break the Sabbath, or get intoxicated, or disobey your parents, or cheat, or do anything which you know is wrong? Instead of making you happy, these things make you miserable in proportion as you

indulge in them. Well, religion calls on you to break off all these, and cease to do evil. Do you not feel the least unhappy when you cultivate "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance," or when you come the nearest to these? These are what religion enjoins, and what go to make up the Christian character. To cease to do evil, and learn to do well, *is religion*. And can you think that this would make you less happy than you now are? Do you not find in your own experience, that the way of transgressors is *hard*? that "there is no peace to the wicked?" You now labour, and are heavy laden with fear and anxiety; but if you will come to Christ, he will relieve you of your burden, and give *rest to your soul*. If you "will run the way of God's commandments," you will find peace and pleasantness. David says, from experience, "Great peace have they who love thy law." Our blessed Saviour says to his followers, "My peace I give unto you." Faithful Christians enjoy the "peace of God, which passeth all understanding." The apostle Paul says to Christians, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice." Thousands and millions have turned from the ways of sin

to the way of holiness, in time past, and they all unite in this testimony, that they have found far more happiness in serving God, than they ever did in the pleasures of sin. These were persons of all ranks in society—the rich, the poor, the high, the low, the master, the slave, the young, the old, the married and the unmarried—but they meet together in religion, and unitedly assert that wisdom's "ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Many of these were persons who had the very best opportunity to find happiness in worldly things, if there *was* any there to be found. But they all testify that they never knew anything about rational, substantial happiness, till they became Christians. Now, if you have not tried religion, you are not as well qualified to judge of its duties and its pleasures, as those who have tried it. And as all who have tried the pleasures of the world and the pleasures of religion, are agreed in their testimony that the service of God affords more happiness, even in this life, you are bound to believe them, or try and see for yourself.

But whether "godliness is profitable unto all things, (having the promise of *the life that now is,*") or not, one thing is certain, men are under

infinite obligations to their Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor. To fear God, and keep his commandments, is the least that they ought all to do, towards cancelling these obligations. Every person ought immediately to devote himself and all he has to God, to spend and be spent in his service. And this they ought to do, even if it exposed them to the severest persecutions, and to death. Thousands have done it, when they knew that it would expose them to the loss of all things dear on earth, and have looked for their reward beyond the grave. And they acted wisely in doing it; for what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what will he give in exchange for his soul?" And now, my dear reader, God says to *you*, "Son, go work to-day in my vineyard." Will you obey God, and immediately enter his service? or will you deliberately disobey him, and risk the consequences? Answer it to your own conscience, in view of the coming judgment.

SECTION X.

The fear of man is a snare.

Another, when urged to become religious, is troubled by this thought, "What will my friends and associates think of me, if I become a Christian?" I would ask such, What will God think of you, if you do *not* become a Christian? What does he think of you now, for having so long neglected to love and serve him? Ought you not to have a greater dread of God's displeasure, than of the displeasure of your friends? But would you be willing now to serve God, if your friends would serve him too? Are you quite sure of it? Have you told them so? Have you told them that the only thing which prevents you from being a Christian, is the dread of leaving their society, and a fear of their remarks about you, if you should become serious? If you have not candidly conversed with them on this subject, how do you know but they feel just as you do about it? Should you tell them your feelings, and invite them to go with you in serving the Lord, it is more than possible that they would accept your invitation.

In a village in the State of New York, an only son was growing deaf. His father was so much troubled about it, that it kept him awake nights. One night, while he was thinking of the sad prospects of his darling boy, and of the impossibility of receiving help from any human arm, he undertook to ask help from God. He had not proceeded far with his prayer in behalf of his son, when his mind was overwhelmed with a sense of the inconsistency of praying for his child, before he had first prayed for himself. He was immediately filled with deep distress, in view of his situation as a lost sinner. His anxiety was so great, that he rolled on his bed, and sighed so loud that he awoke his wife. She inquired the cause of his uneasiness, and asked him if he was sick. He said he was not sick, and then tried to compose his feelings so as to lie still, and, if possible, fall asleep. But after a few minutes he turned and sighed again. His wife again asked what was the matter. He said, "Not much of anything." She then began to suspect the occasion of his uneasiness, and said to him, "Are you displeased and unhappy, because you fear that I think of becoming a Christian?" "Why, do you think of it?" said he. "Yes," was her reply.

"Then *I will too*," said he, "but I hated to go alone." From that time their minds were fully determined to serve God. Not long after this, they came forward together, and avouched the Lord Jehovah to be their God, and united with the visible Church. In like manner, should you, my dear reader, manifest your determination to be on the Lord's side, it would have a tendency to lead your friends and acquaintances to do the same. But let that be as it will, you are to give account of *yourself* to God. God does not say, "You must love and serve me, *if others* do." You ought to obey him, if you are the only one in the universe who does it. The thoughts and remarks of others, will not excuse you for neglecting to obey the Lord Jesus Christ. Is it wise for you to be influenced by your friends to your eternal ruin? Is it wise to disobey God because others do? "Go not with the multitude to do evil." As it regards the sneers of your ungodly associates, care nothing for them. Our Saviour and Judge says, "He that is ashamed of me before men, of him will I be ashamed before my Father and the holy angels." "Fear not them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body

in hell." Do not lose *your* soul, because others are determined to go on in sin and risk the consequences. You must stand or fall *for yourself*, and it is wise, therefore, for you to *foresee the evil, and hide yourself*, if the simple do pass on, and are punished.

SECTION XI.

Inconsistent professors are a stumbling-block.

ANOTHER, when invited to become a Christian, is ready to reply, "I do not see that professors of religion live any better than other people." To such I would say, it is a matter of deep regret that some, who bear the Christian name, give occasion to think that *they are no better* than the world. Our Saviour tells us of some of this kind of professors, who would say to him in the judgment, "Lord, Lord, open unto us; we have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou has taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity." *Professing religion* is one thing, and being truly *pious*, is another, and sometimes

quite a different thing. None but those, who show their faith *by their works*, have a right to expect heaven. The hope of the hypocrite shall perish—shall be as the spider's web—in the giving up of the ghost—in a dying hour. Unconverted persons should be careful, therefore, not to form their ideas of religion from the conduct of unworthy, or ungodly professors. You have a Bible. That teaches you what true religion *is*, and what it leads those, who truly possess it, *to do*. You need not be misled by inconsistent professors. If others are wrong in heart and life, you need not be. The Bible teaches you what you must do to be saved; and if you follow its directions, the misconduct of others need not injure you. If many, or even all the professors of religion with whom you are acquainted, are hypocrites, or self-deceived persons, it will not benefit you. Every one is to stand or fall *for himself*. God will not accept others' inconsistencies as an excuse for our neglect of duty. Our Saviour may with propriety address us, with reference to the irregularities of others, as he did Peter, when he made an inquiry respecting John, "What is that to thee? *follow thou me*." Would it be likely to make your hell more tolerable, to find yourself in the

midst of hypocrites? Well, if you continue without religion a little longer, you will be "where are hypocrites and unbelievers." All ungodly persons, whether in the visible Church or out of it, will go to the same place. I beseech you not to let vile hypocrites cheat you out of heaven. Take heed lest you constrain the Lord to make you a companion of abominable hypocrites forever.

But we may be too uncharitable, in passing judgment upon our neighbours. Our blessed Saviour intimates that we are more ready to see the faults of others, than we are our own. He says, "Why beholdest thou the *mote* that is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the *beam* that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye." We may be keener sighted in seeing the *faults*, than we are in seeing the *virtues* of Christians. One of the ancient prophets asserted that the wicked "*eat up the sins of God's people as they eat bread.*" What the wicked loved to do then, they love to do now. I have sometimes heard wicked men talk as if they thought Christians were incapable of a good action—yea, as if, in

their estimation, Christians were much worse than other men. The truth is, that if the ungodly would take the Saviour's advice, and first cast out the beam from their own eye, they would have more charity for others.

A mistake, into which some men run on this subject, is, they seem to have the impression that those who profess religion, profess to be *perfectly holy*. Because Christians are called *saints*, or holy persons, it is supposed that all true Christians are *without sin*, or perfectly sanctified. As before regeneration the man is *dead in sin*—is wholly sinful—so after this change it is inferred that he is *without sin*: But the truth is, intelligent Christians do not pretend to be perfectly holy. They believe that “no mere man, since the fall, is morally able to keep the commandments of God, but doth daily break them in thought, word, and deed.” Even the best of God's people find that when they would do good, evil is present with them—that they are but partially sanctified. But though Christians often sin, and sometimes sin grievously and scandalously, yet they do not love sin, but hate it. What they do, they allow not. And what they hate, that they do. So then, it is not they—their regenerated na-

ture—that do it, but sin that dwelleth in them. “The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other.” Could you follow the Christian into his closet, after you have seen him give way to an unholy temper, or to an idle and foolish word, or to an improper action, you would witness tears of godly sorrow flowing down his cheeks, as he confesses his sins before God and repents of them. The ungodly witnessed Peter’s denial of Christ, and his cursing and swearing, but they were not with him when he *went out* and *wept* bitterly. Thus you may witness the faults of Christians, and may conclude that they feel no more penitence for sin, or hatred of it, than others do. But could you see them when they are alone, weeping and mourning over their sins and shortcomings, you might think otherwise. All true Christians hate those very sinful words and actions, which you may think they *allow* themselves to do and say. When they discover in their hearts a propensity to evil, or when that propensity has betrayed them into sin, they sincerely abhor themselves, and repent in dust and ashes. It is very desirable that all who profess Godliness, should honour their profes-

sion, and thus recommend, by example as well as precept, the religion of the Lord Jesus. But as there are many who bear the Christian name, that will doubtless continue to disgrace their calling, would it not be well for *you* to become a decided and consistent disciple of our blessed Saviour, that your influence may help correct the irregularities of the unstable and disorderly. This is evidently the wisest and safest course for you. Will you not then come to the decision of Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

SECTION XII.

No notion of being scared into religion.

As the minister attempts to *persuade* men by means of the terror of the Lord, one starts up and says: "I have no idea of being scared to heaven." To such I would say, No one expects to scare you to heaven. If it were possible to frighten people into heaven as timid sheep are frightened into a strange fold, they would not willingly remain there. But no person can be frightened into religion, or into heaven. None

can be induced to go *towards* heaven, unless he loves God, and holiness, and religious duties. Probably the reason why God preaches so much terror to the wicked is, "the hardness of their hearts." There is such a fatal death-slumber fallen upon men, that they will not be aroused but by the trumpet and thunders of Mount Sinai. The object of preaching "the terror of the Lord," and of warning men to "flee from the wrath to come," is to "save them *through* FEAR, pulling them out of the fire." Unless the man sleeping in a burning house can be awakened, he must perish. And if whispering in his ear, or talking moderately to him, does not arouse him, is it better to let him be consumed, than to try to awaken him by hallooing, "*fire, FIRE,*" even if it is liable to give him a temporary fright? Our object, in sounding an alarm in his ear, is not to injure the man by frightening him, but to lead him to see his danger that he may avoid death. So when the Lord Jesus Christ informs men that it is better to part with a right eye, or a right hand, or a right foot, which was likely to occasion their destruction, than to be cast into hell, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched; and when he so vividly depicts the sad and hopeless

condition of the rich man "in hell, lifting up his eyes, being in torment," crying, "I am tormented in this flame;" and when he so pathetically inquires of his impenitent, self-conceited hearers, "how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" and when he says that the hour is coming when "all that are in their graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth, they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation;" and when he asserts that He "shall come in the glory of his Father with the holy angels," and assemble all nations at his bar, and receive the righteous into everlasting life, and send away the wicked "into everlasting punishment;" in all these and similar representations, Christ's object doubtless was to arouse attention, and, if possible, to lead men to flee from the wrath to come, and secure the salvation of their souls. Though the Lord may not scare men into religion, or into heaven, yet he may present to their minds motives, which ought to make them *fear and quake*, while they are living in disobedience to his commands. Thus said the Lord: "O, wicked man, thou shalt surely die. He that, being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed,

and that without remedy. Their foot shall slide in due time. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places ; thou castedst them down into destruction. When they cry, ' Peace and Safety,' then sudden destruction cometh upon them. Because there is wrath, beware, lest he take thee away with his stroke ; then, a great ransom cannot deliver thee."

There are multitudes, whom the goodness of God does not lead to repentance ; and must God employ no other motives but those of mercy and love, to try to induce them to repent, that they may be saved ? Must he confine himself to invitations and promises, in his efforts to persuade them to be reconciled to him ? What do those persons mean, who say that they will not be scared to heaven ? Do they mean that they had rather go to hell, than be aroused to attend to religion by motives of terror ? Do they mean to dictate to God, or his minister, how he must preach to them, and tell him what motives shall, and what motives shall not, be employed to influence their minds ? God may know, as well as such persons, what will be most likely to save their souls. Does it look modest for a poor, feeble, ignorant worm of the dust, to hold up his head and say : " I will not be moved by fear

to attend to religion?" If the Bible be true, then *all unconverted persons are, EVERY MOMENT, exposed to hell.* Is it so, and shall they be kept in ignorance of it? Shall God's ministers seek to *please* their hearers, or to *save* them? Shall they withhold some of the constraining motives of the Gospel, for fear they will *frighten* or displease some of their hearers? Shall they thus cry, '*Peace, Peace,*' to their impenitent hearers, when God is at *war* with them; and, when he has said in his word, and by his Providence, that "there is *no peace* to the wicked?" And will those persons, who are conscious that they have never "passed from death unto life," be offended at those motives, and at that kind of preaching, which have always been most owned and blessed of God to the conversion of sinners? The excuse, that you will not be scared to heaven, is aimed, as you can see, not so much at ministers, as at God himself; for no minister ever preached half so much terror as God did at Sinai; nor half so much of hell and damnation, with all their dreadful terrors, as our Lord Jesus Christ did. "Wo unto him, then, that striveth with his Maker."

SECTION XIII.

How came sin into the world?

WHEN the subject of personal religion is introduced, in order to ward off the truth from his own conscience, one will ask, "How came sin into the universe?" To such I would reply as follows: It is admitted on all hands that there is *sin*, or moral evil, in the universe. The experience of all men, in all countries, and all ages, proves conclusively that there is *moral good* and *moral evil* in the world. Every nation, every state, every family, in a word, every thing in the shape of government is built on this, as a fundamental principle in the existing state of things, namely, that there is such a thing as *moral right*, and *moral wrong*. What would be the condition of society in any nation, which should embrace and publish that there is no such a thing as *wrong*? that no man is bound to *perform* what are now called *moral duties*, and no man is bound to *abstain* from what are now called *moral evils*? What would be the value of life, or property, or character, or chastity, in such a community? Every one would do that which his inclination, and

appetites, and passions prompted him to do. Such a state of things, to a considerable extent, once existed in France. It was after the French nation decreed that the Bible was *priestcraft*, and death, an eternal sleep. That period is spoken of as *the reign of terror*. Surely, things were in a *terrible* state. Thousands and thousands were massacred, and the whole kingdom was one vast brothel. Such would be the state of things throughout the earth, if the distinction between moral right and moral wrong were done away. The difficulty is not removed by saying, there is such a thing as *civil* right and wrong, and *social* right and wrong. Civil and social rights cannot well be maintained, unless they are founded on *moral* rights. Civil and social rights do not reach the *spring of action*. There needs to be a sense of *moral obligation*, to lead mankind to pay much regard to their civil and social obligations. We take it for granted, therefore, that there is moral evil, or *sin*, in the universe. And this seems to be admitted by those who inquire, "How sin came into the universe?" We then make this affirmation, *Sin is in the world*.

Another thought, which we need to contemplate in this connection, is this, *God is infinite*.

ly holy, and infinitely benevolent. This is admitted by all those who acknowledge his existence. Now, if God be infinitely *holy*, he must be opposed to sin, which is the opposite of holiness. And if he is opposed to sin, he could not influence angels, or men, or any other being to commit sin. This is in accordance with Scripture: "God cannot be tempted of evil; *neither tempteth he any man.*" We may be assured, therefore, that God did not *dispose* holy beings to commit sin. Such a thought would be a slander on his character. Instead of disposing his creatures to commit sin, God *blames them for sinning*, and threatens the heaviest possible penalty against those who dare to sin. He says, "The soul that sinneth, *shall die*;" "The wages of sin is *death*;" "These shall go away into *everlasting punishment.*" The angels who sinned, "are reserved in everlasting chains," to be punished. We see, therefore, that God treats men and fallen angels, as though *they had themselves originated*, and *committed* all the sin which there is in the universe. It is of no consequence to us whether we can understand or not, *how* the first holy being could conceive sin. Neither is it of any consequence to us, *what was the first sin*; whether it was a

desire for supreme power, ambition, envy, or pride. We know there must have been a *first* sin, and it has had legions of followers. Well for us to remember, that "secret things belong to the Lord our God ; but those that are revealed, to us and our children." We need not try to reach things which are too high for us. On this subject, it is enough for us to know that *we are sinners, voluntary sinners*, and that we, by voluntarily committing sin, are giving our approbation to the deed of that *being*, who committed *the first sin*. Our great inquiry ought to be, How can I obtain the forgiveness of my sins, and secure the eternal salvation of my soul? This important question is answered in the Sacred Volume, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

SECTION XIV.

I want to wait for others' halting.

SOME people, when urged to seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, are ready to say, "I want to see how the young converts hold out, before I commence." I would

say to such, you have already seen very many Christians hold out to the end, and die in triumph; you have also seen many others holding on their way, year after year, ever since you were a child, and the prospect is that they will endure unto the end, and be saved. Why do you wish to wait to see *others hold out*, before you even *commence* the Christian course? Will it do you any good, if some, who seem to start fair for heaven, turn aside from the way, and show that they have "no part nor lot in this matter?" It always has been the case that some go out from us, and it is because at heart "they are not of us; for if they had been of us, they no doubt would have continued with us." But if one quarter, or even one half, who profess to be converted, should prove to be hypocrites, or self-deceived, would that do you any good? It is a matter of regret that *all*, who profess religion, do not give evidence of being truly pious; but there have always been *foolish* virgins as well as *wise* ones. *You*, as well as myself and others, ought to weep over the inconsistency, formality, and hypocrisy of those who fall from their *apparent* steadfastness. Is it wise for you to wait for the halting of others, when it will not alter your case, let the mat-

ter turn out as it will with them? While you are thus waiting to see how others hold out, your heart is growing harder, your mind is filling with skepticism, your influence is drawing others down towards perdition, and your own life is swiftly passing away without doing any good in the cause of Christ, or for your own soul, or for your fellow men. Does your conscience approve of the course you are taking? Will you dare go to the judgment with the excuse, that you desired to wait to see how others held out before you commenced? God will not ask you, at his bar, how *others* held out; but he may ask you, *why did not* you begin, and *continue*, and *endure to the end* in the ways of the Lord? Are you prepared to give a satisfactory answer to such a question? I pray you, give up your excuses, and commence at once the great business of life. “*Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.*”

SECTION XV.

If I begin, I can't finish.

ONE is ready to say, "I fear that if I begin to build, I shall not be able to finish." It is commendable, surely, to sit down and count the cost, before making a profession of religion. But, in doing it, we should be candid. Now, let me entreat you to look on all sides of this subject. . Remember that many of your own age, and many younger than you are, and some perhaps farther advanced in life, and these too of every variety of talents and intelligence, and occupying all kinds of situations where it is lawful for men to be, have *begun to build the Christian tower, and have gone on with it till it was finished*. Do you seriously think that you possess *less power*, and *less means* for accomplishing this work, than some of those who have completed a Christian character, and who have "brought forth the top stone thereof, crying, *grace, grace*, to it? What do you suppose you lack that they possessed? Have you not as strong a mind as many of those who have become Christians? Have your opportunities not been as good as

those which many of them enjoyed? Have you not as much power to love, or hate, as they had? And if *they could*, and *did*, become Christians, and hold out in religion to the end of life, why cannot *you*? If the commencing and completing a Christian character, was now a *new thing*—an experiment—and if the grace of God were not proffered to those who seek it, then there might be some reason to fear, lest those who begin should not be able to finish. “The world, the flesh, and the devil,” are mighty foes to Zion’s pilgrims; and they are ready, on all occasions, to throw obstacles in their way, and to present before them roaring lions, and mighty giants, and fearful sloughs. Multitudes, on seeing the slough of despond, or on hearing the lions roar, or the giants curse, are deterred from commencing a religious life, and carry back an evil report of the way. But though the difficulties are many and great, yet they are not so many and so great, but that those who set out sincerely to obey God, and are *determined* to make their way to heaven in the Bible-path, can triumphantly say, “they that be for us are more than they that be against us.” The moment the sinner lays down the weapons of his

rebellion, and chooses Christ as the captain of his salvation, he has all the armies of heaven on his side, and God himself for his shield and buckler, and for the rock of his defence. At that eventful moment, he becomes an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ. And though he has no resources of his own, (independent of what he is entitled to as an heir of heaven,) yet he can now draw from the overflowing treasury of his Father, any amount needed to carry forward, and complete his Gospel tower.

In counting the cost, therefore, the sinner should not limit his calculations to his present possessions, but should bear in mind that, by a simple act of faith, or confidence in God, he may become heir of all things. "They that trust in the Lord shall not want any good thing."

If you still say, you fear you should not be able to *finish*, let me tell you that one thing is absolutely certain, namely, *you are sure not to finish, if you do not begin*. You never will *reach* heaven unless you *start* that way. And as long as you are neglecting to repent of your sins, and yield your heart to God, you are going rapidly away from heaven. Do you say, "but I would commence serving God, if I

only *knew* that I should succeed in becoming a Christian, and in persevering in the Christian course to the end." Well, you may know that you will hold out, if you really *believe* in the Lord Jesus Christ; for, by believing in Christ, you become *righteous*—your faith is counted for righteousness—and God, who cannot lie, has expressly declared, "*The righteous shall hold on his way*, and he that hath clean hands be stronger and stronger." Having now counted the cost with me, let me entreat of you to begin to build for eternity at once. You have none too much time to accomplish the mighty work which is before you. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Begin, then, by receiving him as *your Saviour*, your only hope, your chief corner stone. Build upon this foundation, (not hay, wood, and stubble, but) "gold, silver, and precious stones." Keep in mind this truth, you *must begin* to build, or perish for ever. You *must* build upon *Christ*, or perish for ever. You *must* build of good *substantial materials*, "your most holy faith," or you will suffer loss. You *must persevere* in the ways of *well-doing*, seeking for *glory, and honour, and immortality*, or you will never receive eternal life.

SECTION XVI.

My business and religion would not agree.

SOME men, when urged to embrace the Saviour, are ready to say, "My employment and religion would not go well together." Why not? Two can walk together, if they are agreed. If your business is right and proper, religion will not interfere with it. Is your employment such as your conscience, and such as you have reason to believe the Bible justify? Is it such as you would wish to be engaged in when summoned away to the judgment-bar of Christ? Can you, with an honest and upright heart, ask the Lord to prosper you in your business, and to "establish the work of your hands upon you?" Is your employment such as supreme love to God would point out as just and suitable? Is it consistent with the golden rule, which requires you to "love your neighbour as yourself," and to "do as you would be done by?" Now, if your business is justifiable at the bar of conscience, and, if you have reason to think it will be, at the bar of God, you can still continue in it, and become a Christian too. Men have become Christians,

and lived in the enjoyment of religion, who were engaged in all kinds of lawful business. Farmers, mechanics, merchants, lawyers, physicians, and statesmen, have become pious without giving up their business ; and if others have, you may. But perhaps you have doubts as to the propriety and justice of your employment. Perhaps you discover that the direct and legitimate tendency of your business, is to injure your fellow men, either in body, soul, or estate, and that it is thus opposed to the great law of love. If you suspect that this is the tendency of your business, you ought to give it up at once, whether you ever become a Christian or not. If you have serious scruples about the matter, you had better take the safe side. Possibly you are ready to say, "I have embarked all my capital, and more too, in this business, and if I leave it, my family and creditors will suffer." This reminds me of the story of the farmer-sailors. Just before the close of the last war, a number of honest-hearted farmers took it into their heads to get rich in a hurry. To accomplish this, they sold their farms and other disposable property for cash, and then borrowed a considerable amount of their neighbours, and invested it all in a *privateer*. But

while the ship was overhauling, and preparing for a cruise, the news of peace arrived. Filled with consternation at their disappointment, our honest farmers inquired, "What shall be done? We can't afford to lose all our money and time for nothing. And our families and creditors will suffer too. Let us put right off to sea, under pretence that we thought the news of peace only an unauthorized rumour, and if we take one or two good prizes, we shall save ourselves, our families, and our creditors." But one, more conscientious than his comrades, inquired, will this be right? Will this be doing as we would be done by? Will our country, or our God, justify us in taking this course? Will it not be looked upon as piracy?" These questions opened their eyes, and led them to see the impropriety and injustice of the course proposed. Says one, "I will sooner let my family go to the poor-house, than support them in this way." "So will I," said another. "But what will our creditors do?" inquired a third. "They may put us in jail," answered another," and I had rather *die* there, than endanger the lives, and take away the property of the innocent, to pay them." Thus ended this bloodless, unprofitable expedition.

Our farmers concluded to sell their ship, that it might be employed in commerce, for what it would bring, and to return home to support their families, and pay their debts as well as they could. Do you not approve of their decision, and commend their course? Well, then, if you are in a similar predicament, "go and do likewise." What would it profit you to gain the whole world by robbery, or dishonesty, or injustice? or by pursuing a business which is displeasing to God, and injurious to mankind? Those who accumulate property by the slave-trade; or by the sweat, and unpaid toil of slaves; or by gambling, either in games of chance, or in lotteries; or by making or selling intoxicating drinks; or by theatres, or brothels; or by any other unholy business; will doubtless find, sooner or later, that their "gold and silver are cankered, and that the rust of them will be a witness against them, *and will eat their flesh as it were fire.*" Yes, they will doubtless find that they were "heaping treasure together for the last days"—"a treasure of wrath against the day of wrath." And now, what will you do, my dear readers, who are doubtful as to the propriety of your employment? Will you abandon it, and "seek first the kingdom of God and

his righteousness," and trust his promise, that all things necessary "will be added?" or will you hold fast "the mammon of unrighteousness," and thus fail of securing "the true riches?" Act wisely. Act as you will wish you had acted, ten thousand years hence.

SECTION XVII.

Many cares, and no time.

MULTITUDES are ready to say, "My mind is so occupied with worldly cares, that I have no time to attend to religion." To such I would reply, who has brought these cares upon you? Have you been voluntary or not, in assuming them? Do you apprehend that God puts men in circumstances, (while in this state of probation,) where they cannot serve him? Men sometimes put *themselves* upon forbidden ground, where it would be difficult to serve the Lord. This is the case, in fact, with all men by nature. All have gone out of the way of holiness, and are on the devil's ground. While they remain there, it is utterly impossible for them to please and serve God. Men come wil-

lingly into this state, and voluntarily remain in it. And yet they sometimes have the effrontery to offer their situation—the situation of their own choosing—as a reason why they do not serve the Lord. “The carnal mind,” say they, “is enmity against God ; it is not subject to his law ; neither indeed can be : so then they, that are in the flesh, *cannot* please God.” They seem to take it for granted, because they hate God and his service, and because they cannot love and hate him at the same time, that *therefore* they are excusable for continuing to hate, and refusing to love him. They seem to think that God requires them to perform *holy* duties with an *unholy* heart—that he commands them to “repent and believe the Gospel,” to “love God and their neighbour,” while he allows them to *remain* under the influence of the carnal mind. Whereas, the truth is, God gives them no permission to remain in a sinful state, *even for a moment*. He commands sinners *as their first duty*, to lift up *holy* hands, without wrath and doubting. The first act of the sinner, which God approves, is *heartly obedience*. He does nothing acceptably, till he does this. And when he does this, he is a *new creature*, and is no longer in the *flesh*, but in the *spirit*.

He now can repent, and love God, and believe in Christ, and pray, lifting up *holy* hands, and engage in all Christian duties in a manner which is pleasing to God, and profitable to himself. And now, my dear reader, if you have brought yourself into trouble—if you have loaded your own mind with cares and anxieties—if you are on forbidden ground, where you cannot do your duty—a regard to your own good, and a regard to the pleasure of God, should lead you at once to abandon your present position, and throw off the load which you have wickedly assumed, and begin *immediately* to walk in all the commands and ordinances of the Lord, blameless. But if your cares and perplexities are brought upon you, in the providence of God, without your fault, they need not, and should not prevent your serving the Lord. Are you a parent? and is your mind occupied in providing for, and taking care of your children? You are the very one who needs the sustaining influence of religion. Are you taking thought for the morrow, saying, “What shall we eat? what shall we drink? and wherewith shall we be clothed?” Our kind Saviour says to you *in particular*, “Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,

and all these things shall be added." Are you immersed in business, or embarrassed with debts? Surely you need a friend, to whom you can unbosom all your cares and trials, and one who can be touched with the feeling of your infirmities. Such a friend is the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not right, nor safe, nor comfortable, to be "careful and troubled about many things," while the "*one thing needful*" is neglected.

Call to mind the solemn truth, that though you have so many cares, and so much business, as to prevent your serving God, and making preparation for heaven, yet God will never accept your cares and business instead of your heart and service. With all your cares and troubles, you are hastening on towards the judgment. Death is this moment preparing an arrow for you, and soon you will fall, and groan, and die. Your cares, your anxieties, your business, or your disregard to eternal things, will present no obstruction to the deadly shaft. Cares, or no cares, *you must die*. You must go to the judgment seat of Christ, and there render an account of your disregard of God and divine things. You may now fill your mind with farms and merchandise, with

ships and stores, with work and trade, with wife and children, with food and raiment, but you cannot hide behind these so that death will fail to find you. He will follow you into all your lurking places. "The hail shall sweep away your refuges of lies, and the waters shall overflow your hiding places." I pray you then, let your anxieties be turned to a preparation for heaven. As to your not having time to do right—to serve God—it is all a mistake. Religion consists in attending to our lawful and proper business, with a view to God's glory. Those who are the most religious, are "*diligent in business*," as well as "fervent in spirit." Only act up to this divine direction, "Whether ye eat, or drink, or *whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God*," and you will have good evidence that you are a Christian. And as you must *find time to die*, will it not be wise *to take time to prepare to die*? Suitable time spent in religious duties, will not hinder your progress in lawful business. And if you spend *considerable* time in imparting religious instruction to your family, (if you have one,) and in cultivating religious feelings in your closet, in the prayer meeting, and on the Sabbath, you will not find it time lost, or time unprofitably spent.

It takes *time* to amass a large treasure in heaven, as well as it does to accumulate one on the earth. And time spent in laying up treasure above, will be found, in the end, to have been a hundred fold more productive, than time spent in laying up treasure upon the earth. *Try it*, my reader, and tell me when I meet you at the judgment, if I was not correct.

SECTION XVIII.

Religion would ruin my property and reputation.

ANOTHER, when pressed to seek the salvation of his soul, replies, "I fear that becoming a Christian would have a bad effect on my property and reputation." To such I would say, if you have acquired your property by unfair, or dishonest means, this may be the case. But what good does this ill-gotten gain do you now? Do you enjoy yourself in its possession? Does that food, or drink, afford a good relish to your appetite, which you are conscious properly belongs to others? Do those garments sit easy on your body, which you

know are purchased by money, "kept back by fraud" from your creditors? Ill-gotten gain is, to its possessor, like burning coals in his bosom. A man is far happier by restoring it to its lawful owner, (even if he is thereby reduced to absolute penury,) than he is in its possession.

And as to reputation, yours may not now stand as fair in the estimation of the community, as you apprehend it does. Those who have heard the story of your injustice and oppression, your meanness and dishonesty, your gambling, and so forth, would not be as likely to relate it to you as to others. The world probably knows more about you than you are aware of. Though the community is suffering you to *live*, yet it is doing it more for want of an opportunity to put you down, than from any personal respect which is cherished for you. Depend upon it, your name is not now like "precious ointment," which fills the air with sweet fragrance. And the longer you remain in your present condition, the worse it is for you. Should those, who are acquainted with you, discover in you even *now* a disposition to *do right*, and should they see you restore, as far as possible, what you have taken wrongfully, and manifest that you deeply regret your past conduct, they would

have a much higher regard for you than they now cherish. And their confidence in you, and their esteem for you, would increase just in proportion as they saw you disposed to "deal justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with God."

But if it were otherwise—if you should be treated with scorn and contempt in consequence of your endeavours to repair the wrongs you have done—still your own peace of mind, and the command of God, should lead you at once, and without the least hesitation, to pursue this course. Our blessed Saviour says, "Fear not them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear HIM, who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Which do you prefer, the love and esteem of pious men, and holy angels, and Christ our Lord, or the hollow-hearted applause of wicked men and devils? But the truth doubtless is, that even wicked men and devils inwardly respect and revere those, who "cease to do evil, and learn to do well"—those, who "break off their sins by righteousness, and their iniquities, by turning unto the Lord"—far more than they do those, who, like themselves, "do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness."

As to property, gotten by iniquity, you would be better off without it, than you can be with it. It only causes you trouble of heart, and vexation of spirit. It preys like an eating cancer on all your enjoyments. When Zaccheus, the publican, was willing to receive Christ, he stood and said, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything by false accusation, I restore fourfold." And Jesus said, "This day is salvation come to this house." *Salvation*—forgiveness of sins, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, a preparation for heaven—is of more value to you than all the wealth of this world. "Honesty is the best policy," even if we only consider our *present* good; but taking into view our whole existence, that man is more foolish than a fool, who accumulates property, or who retains property accumulated by unjustifiable means. "What will it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" And the man who remains unjust, or dishonest, must necessarily lose his soul. No matter whether he have gotten *little* or *much* by dishonesty; if he have gotten *any thing* in that way, he has shown that he had a covetous and dishonest *disposition*." He that is unjust *in the least*, is

unjust also in much," that is, he has shown that he would have taken much in the same way, if opportunity had offered. Count the cost; is it more wise to hold on to the property of others, (where the laws of the country cannot take it from you,) and lose your soul as the consequence? than it is to confess your sins, and make restitution as far as possible, and thereby secure eternal life? Heaven is worth very great sacrifices. Hell is a terrible place. Its punishments will be hard to bear. "Who can dwell with devouring fire? Who can dwell with *everlasting burnings*?" Heaven and hell are before you. The decision which you are now making, may settle the point for you forever—may fix your destiny for eternity. Bear in mind that "the *extortioner* and the *unjust*," as well as "murderers, and idolaters, and adulterers, and liars, and drunkards, *shall not inherit the kingdom of God*." Do you value your "unrighteous mammon," more than you do the favour of God, and the happiness of heaven? Do you dread poverty and reproach, more than you do hell, and the everlasting frown of "our God, who is a consuming fire?" Our Saviour says to those in your situation, "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not

all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." Now, are you willing to suffer the loss of all things for Christ's sake? or, like Esau, will you sell your birthright for a mess of pottage? But it is more than possible that, if you determine *to do right*, you will not be a loser in this life. Our blessed Lord has said, that those who leave houses and lands, and so forth, for his sake, "shall receive manifold more *in this present life*, and in the world to come, life everlasting." Venture upon his promise, and see if he will not be a good paymaster.

SECTION XIX.

Prayers, an abomination.

SOME men, when urged to call upon the Lord, very gravely answer, "The prayers of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord." To such I would say, do you really think that *your* prayers would be an abomination in the sight of God? And is this the reason why you so seldom attempt to pray? Is this the reason why you pray when you are sick, or in affliction, or in danger? Does it do better to mock God,

or offer to him that which is an abomination, at such times, than when things go well with you? When wicked men are dying, they raise their earnest prayers to God that he would spare their lives. Is it because they think their prayers are sin and abomination, that they take this solemn time to present them to a holy God?

Again, if your prayers are such an abomination to God, what is your *neglect* to pray? If an *attempt to obey God* is sin, what is your continued and wilful *disobedience*, but a still greater sin? If the holiest thing you ever attempted to do, is so *hateful* in the sight of a holy God, what are all your other acts—your swearing, your Sabbath-breaking, your disobedience to your parents, your adulteries, your falsehoods, your dishonesties, your oppressions of the poor, your covetousness, your *neglect* to pray, your *neglect* to assemble with Christians for divine worship, your *neglect* to search the Scriptures, your *neglect* to repent of your sins, your *neglect* to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, or your *neglect* to forsake all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, and righteously, and godly in the world—how must these things appear to God, if even your

prayers are an abomination to him? Surely, you are in a wretched state, if your best, your *holiest*, performance before God, is sin! Your *prayer* an abomination! Alas, for you! What must God think of your intemperance? Your foolish and corrupting conversation? Your hard speeches about Christians? Your pride? Your unreasonable anger? Your envy? Your concupiscence? Your abuse of God's mercies? Your misimprovement of his judgments?—and your resistance of his Spirit? Yes, if your prayer is an abomination, (and doubtless it is, unless you pray, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting,) in what light does God look upon the rest of your life? If your *prayers* are sin, it is high time you were alarmed about yourself. It is high time that you repent, and believe in Christ, that his *intercession* for you may make both yourself and your prayers acceptable to God. If, by faith in the Lord Jesus, you secure him for your Mediator, High Priest, and Advocate, you can then come boldly unto the throne of mercy, and find grace to help, in every time of need. How delightful to have a heart to pray, and to be enabled to offer up the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous, which availeth much.

O with what different feelings does God regard the prayers of his devout worshippers, and the prayers and sacrifices of the wicked ! One is his delight ; the other his abhorrence. Give your whole heart to God, and then you will find it pleasant and profitable to pray, and to serve him, in all his commands and ordinances.

SECTION XX

I'll be no hypocrite.

ANOTHER person, assuming an air of importance, says, "I have no notion of being a hypocrite." To such I would reply, who wants you to be a hypocrite ? We do not. We abhor the character of the hypocrite as much as you do. We wish no man to be a hypocrite. We wish you, and all others, to be *true Christians*. The Christian and the hypocrite are very different persons, and are destined to, very different places. We ask you to *pray*, but we do not ask you to do it with a hypocritical heart. We ask you to *read the Bible*, but we do not ask you to do it with the heart of a hypocrite. We ask you to *attend meeting*, but we do not ask

you to do it with the hypocrite's sad countenance and foul heart. We ask you to attend to *all the duties* of religion and morality, but we do not ask you to play the hypocrite in attending to them. We ask you to serve God *in sincerity and in truth*, and there can be no hypocrisy in that. But, after all, is it not possible that you are deceiving yourself, and playing the hypocrite, in the very efforts which you are making to avoid hypocrisy? A hypocrite is one who pretends to be different from what he really is. Well, have you not sometimes pretended to have more anxiety about your eternal state than you really had? Or, have you not pretended to have *less* anxiety than you really felt? When you have been asked, if your mind was not more than ordinarily impressed with religious considerations, have you not said *no*, when you knew that you did feel an uncommon solicitude about the eternal welfare of your soul? What was this but hypocrisy? My advice to you is, be careful that your abhorrence of hypocrisy does not keep you out of the kingdom of heaven. There is real danger of it. It lies in this: when your mind is serious and thoughtful, and you would be glad to know what you must do to be saved,

your fear and abhorrence of hypocrisy will be liable to prevent your asking advice of experienced ministers or Christians, lest they should think you more anxious than you really are. Thus, by neglecting to tell your feelings, your solicitude is liable to result in no good, and you grieve and offend the Holy Spirit by the exertions which you make *not to show more feeling than you really have*. If your mind is uncommonly thoughtful, if your mind is disposed to dwell on *death, judgment, eternity, heaven, hell, your sins*, and the like, you may depend upon it, it is God's Spirit striving with you, in order to lead you to repent and prepare for heaven. As you value your soul, do **not** suppress these feelings. Do not be ashamed of them. Ask counsel of some judicious Christian, or of your minister, if you have a pious one. But especially, yield your heart immediately to God, and become a true Christian yourself. This is the only effectual way to avoid the character and the doom of hypocrites and unbelievers.

SECTION XXI.

Not enough convicted.

ANOTHER person, when called upon to repent and give his heart to God, exclaims, "I am not enough convicted." How much conviction do you want? What is conviction? It is a sense of having done wrong. Unless a man is sensible that he is going the wrong way, he will not be likely to change his course. But when he is *convinced* that he is wrong, he need not *wait* till he has more painful evidence of it, before he stops, and turns about, and commences retracing his steps. So the sinner, when he sees himself to be a sinner, need not wait before he breaks off his sins by righteousness, and his iniquities, by turning unto the Lord. Conviction is not religion. If it were, we might say, the more conviction the better. Multitudes have been overwhelmed with conviction, who have no religion. Satan probably has more conviction than any sinner in this world ever had. But his conviction does him no good. Conviction is not only not religion, but the genuineness of a man's religion does not at all depend on the amount of his conviction. Some,

like Judas, have conviction enough to drive them to despair and ruin, while it brings them no good. Others, like Zaccheus, feel sensible of their faults, mourn over them, and forsake them, while hardly a tear is visible in their eyes, or scarcely an audible sigh bursts from their contrite hearts. These last, calmly and deliberately *resolve*, "As for me, *I will serve the Lord.*" They cease to do evil, and learn to do well. They repent of their sins, as committed against God, and exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance.

God seems to take it for granted that all men *have*, or *might* have, conviction enough. He no where intimates that sinners should *wait* for conviction, or for *more* conviction, before they act right—before they repent and obey the Gospel. His language to sinners is, (*not* be convicted and converted, but) "*Repent, and be converted*, that your sins may be blotted out." God seems to lay no stress upon conviction, as though it made the heart better. The idea, which some good people have embraced, that "*long convictions make lasting conversions*," comes up out of the bottomless pit. There is no Scripture in it. There is nothing in the ex-

perience of the Christian world to warrant it. I have no doubt it is the doctrine of devils, and one too, which has drowned many souls in perdition. It has led many convicted sinners to put off repentance and submission, vainly waiting for *more feeling*, till the Holy Spirit, grieved and offended, has taken his sad flight, and their "last state has become worse than the first."

Was not the conversion of Paul *genuine* and *lasting*?—and yet his conviction was short, and his mind, in the mean time, perfectly collected and rational. Were not the conversions on the day of Pentecost, and the conversions of the eunuch and the Philippian jailer, *genuine* and *lasting*?—and yet all of these conversions were preceded by only a very few moments of conviction. As soon as sinners have enough conviction to induce them *to do their duty*, they have all that is necessary. If sinners were required to merit the favour of God, and a title to heaven, by their *impenitent penances*, then there might be some propriety in calling on them to go *for a long time* with "their heads bowed down like a bulrush, and with sackcloth and ashes spread under them." But as God is as angry with the *convicted sinner*

as he is with the one who is stupid, the idea that the sinner must *wait* for more conviction, is wicked, and dangerous, and *impious*. "God *now* commandeth *all men*, every where, to repent." This command is addressed to the convicted, as well as to the stupid—to all men, in all the circumstances, as to feeling and so forth, in which they are now found.

But is it not possible that you are trying to keep off conviction, at the same time that you think that you wish to be more deeply convicted? Truth is the instrument with which God convicts men. *That* truth is contained in the Bible. If you honestly wish to be convicted, you will *read the Bible daily*, and carefully meditate on what you read. If you do not pursue this course, you show that you are afraid of being convicted. Our Saviour says, "Every one that doeth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, *lest his deeds should be reprov'd.*" Are you not loath to have ministers, or Christians, ask you respecting your feelings? Do you not sometimes take pains to avoid them? Have you not tried to turn the conversation into some other channel, when you thought it was becoming personal? If you were willing to be convicted,

you would be glad to have your case investigated, and would seek opportunities for personal conversation with those who have more experience than yourself. If you really wanted to be convicted, you would, without any hesitation, ask the prayers of Christians, and go to the inquiry meeting, if there was any. You would not stay away from meeting, because the preaching, and exhortations, and prayers, make you feel bad; for that very "feeling bad," is conviction. If you wanted to be convicted, therefore, you would go to those meetings, and hear those preachers, which make you feel the most unhappy, while you are impenitent. The object of preaching is to make all unconverted sinners feel unhappy, that they may be led to seek their happiness in Christ alone. Men must be willing to feel sick, or they will not call on the Great Physician.

Now, be entreated to reflect that you have broken God's law, in thought, word, and deed. If you see wherein you have *ever* done wrong, by doing what the law of God forbids, or by neglecting what it requires, a sense of this *one mis-deed*, is conviction. I once knew a man who got angry without sufficient cause, and a sense of having done wrong in thus getting

angry, was his conviction; and when he repented of that sin, he repented of all his sins, and trusted that he received forgiveness of God through Christ. If you can remember *one sin*, which you have committed, a sense of the *wrong* of that sin is conviction. Reflect that one sin, if not forgiven through the atonement of Christ, will for ever exclude you from heaven. Fly then to the cross. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." *To-day*, if you will hear his voice, harden not your heart.

SECTION XXII.

"Religion not for me."

ANOTHER tells us, with a despairing look, "I don't know that religion is for me." Why not for you as well as others? Do you look upon religion as upon a prize in a lottery, which now and then one is so fortunate as to draw? This is altogether a mistaken view of it. Religion is the "pearl of great price," which *any one*, and *every one*, may come in possession of, by selling all that he hath. Religion is so abundant, and so free, that *no one need fail of*

obtaining it. It is offered, without money and without price, to all who want it. It is free as water: it is called the "living water"—"the water of life," and "*whosoever will*" is invited to partake of it *freely*. "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, "If *any man thirst*, let him come unto me and drink." At another time he said, "Come unto me, *all ye that labour and are heavy laden*, and I will give you rest." And in the Old Testament he says, "Look unto me and be ye saved, *all the ends of the earth*." From these and similar passages of Scripture, one of three things is evident: either the Lord Jesus Christ *cannot* do as he promises, or he is *not sincere* in promising, or *all* who *want* religion can have it. You will not pretend that Christ is not sincere in promising, nor that he *lacks ability* to do as he promises. You must then come to the conclusion, that *whosoever will*, may have religion. But what is religion? Religion is *doing the will of God from the heart*, or *heartly obedience to God*. In other words, *religion is SERVING God with a sincere heart*. This embraces a "believing in his Son," repenting of our sins, "calling on his name," and obeying his other commands. In view of what has been said,

you can see whether religion is for you, or not. If you are truly willing to serve God, then religion is for you. But if you are really *willing* to serve him, you will immediately commence doing it, if you have not already commenced. A willingness to serve God will lead you to study the Bible, and to pray in your closet and in your family, (if you have one,) and to reverence God's day, and name, and ordinances, and to "live *soberly*, and *righteously*, and *Godly* in the world." Many are willing to have the *benefits* of religion, who do not wish religion itself. Balaam was willing to die the death of the righteous, though he loved the wages of unrighteousness. All men, and even devils, would be glad of happiness, if they could come in possession of it without being holy—without loving and obeying God. But there is as great a difference between the *benefits* of religion, and *religion itself*, as there is between the *wages* of a man, and the *hard labour* for which these wages are paid. "The *willing* and *obedient* shall eat the good of the land." Our Lord Jesus, being made perfect, as our mediator, by suffering, "became the author of eternal salvation unto all them *that obey him*." Religion is for *you*, as well as others, *if you will obey Christ*.

Should you fail of religion, therefore, and come short of heaven, it will be, not because religion was not for you, but because you were not willing to forsake your sins, and serve the Lord. God is now saying to you, "Go work to-day in my vineyard." Do you mean to obey this command? Do you say, "I would, if I knew that I should be saved?" Obey, and you may be sure of salvation. Do your duty, and leave yourself at God's disposal, and you need have no fears as to your future destiny. Begin at once. It may be *now* or *never* with you.

SECTION XXIII

The thought of repenting painful.

ONE man says, "I cannot bear the thought of repenting, it is so painful to me." So said Mrs. H. to the writer, while she was in one of the last stages of consumption. She had no idea of dying without repentance; but the thoughts of it were so distressing to her, that she wished to defer it as long as possible. Poor woman, she was disappointed. Death came upon her suddenly, and the dreaded work of re-

pentance, there is reason to fear, was never done. But we would ask, What is there in repentance, that fills your mind with so much horror? It includes *retrospection*, *conviction*, *contrition*, and *conversion*. It ought not to be painful to look over one's past life. But if we have done that which fills us with shame and sorrow on the review, (and who has not?) then let us be sensible of our faults, and exercise godly sorrow for them, and turn from them. When you have done these things, you have repented. Does not the good child, who may have disobeyed his father, even *take pleasure* in those tears and that confession, which brings back to him his father's confidence, and his father's smiles? Repentance, to one who is disposed to do right, is not only a duty, but a gratification. The prodigal's tears were sweet, both to his father and to himself. Repentance, therefore, instead of being looked upon as a very unpleasant and hated business, should be attended to with alacrity, as a necessary and healthful exercise for the soul. To make the worst of repentance, it is a *medicine*, which infallibly cures the sick who take it. It is a *medicine*, without which no mortal man can be healed, and purified, and saved. Is it wise in

the sick man, to refuse the healing medicine, because it is unpleasant to his taste? Neither is it wise in sinners to put off repentance, because it *seems* to be unpleasant to exercise it. Infinite good results from it. How much better to repent now, while pardon is offered to the penitent, than to repent eternally, where repentance will be utterly unavailing!

SECTION XXIV.

Religion don't come at one's beck.

ANOTHER says, "I don't believe that people can get religion just when they have a mind to." What hinders? If they have a mind for religion, what prevents their becoming religious at once? Can their wicked companions, or the great adversary, keep them from serving God, if they are really disposed to serve him? Multitudes have become Christians, and served the Lord faithfully, who met with great opposition, and persecution, and even death itself, in consequence. And if others, under such discouraging circumstances, have become Christians, and lived in the faithful discharge of duty, what

hinders your doing it? Do you think that the *Lord* would prevent your having religion if you sincerely desired it? And do you think that He would be unwilling that you should have it, *when* you really desired it? Instead of being *unwilling* that you should have religion, and have it too when you have a mind for it, does he not freely offer salvation to *all*, who have a mind, or will, for it? And is he not ready to confer pardon—religion—at *any time* when he sees men ready, and prepared for it? He says expressly, “*Whosoever will*, let him take the water of life freely.” His time to bless is “*now*.” You see, therefore, that *any person* can have religion *when* he really *desires* it, or *when he has a mind to serve God*.

“Well, then,” you may be ready to say, “if I can get religion when I have a mind to, then I will take my own time for it.” Consider that people do not always have a mind for religion. Some people never have such a mind. No sinner can be sure that he will ever have a mind for religion. No person, uninfluenced by the Holy Spirit, ever desires religion. Neither old age, nor a disrelish for life, nor a fear of death, creates a mind or desire for religion. Every sinner is *entirely*, and *at all times*, dependent

on the Holy Spirit for a mind, or will, to serve God and be a Christian. And God says, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." And if the Holy Spirit leave the sinner, he will have no more mind for religion than the devil has. The strong disinclination to holy, self-denying duties, which all unregenerate persons possess, renders it just as certain that they will *never* "repent and believe the Gospel," if abandoned of the Holy Ghost, as though they had no power to break off their sins and serve the Lord. The sinner's resolution to do his duty at a future period, is more feeble and inoperative, than the confirmed drunkard's resolution to reform while he continues to tipple. And the longer a man remains under the dominion of sin, the greater strength and inveteracy does his wicked disinclination acquire. Hence you see that comparatively few old people are brought to repentance. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin? or the leopard his spots? then may ye do good, who are *accustomed* to do evil." While, therefore, it is true, that *any one* can have religion, (that is, can serve God and be pardoned,) *when* he has "a mind to," it is equally true, that *no one* will ever have a *mind* to do his duty, unless the Holy Spirit

work in him "*to will* and to do." And if *you* have no mind to repent and turn to the Lord *now*, you ought to fear lest you will *never* have "a mind to." But if you are *now disposed* to have religion, (as perhaps you may think you are,) I beseech you to commence *immediately* the service of God, and you will soon rejoice in his pardoning mercy. Let your penitence and faith, your humility and Christian love, your prayers and conversation, your zeal and regularity, make it manifest that you do sincerely desire religion. If you neglect the present *call* of the Spirit, he may never call again.

"Sinner, perhaps this very day,
Thy last accepted time may be ;
Oh, should'st thou grieve him now away,
Then hope may never beam on thee."

SECTION XXV.

Waiting God's time.

ANOTHER says, when urged to immediate repentance, "I must wait the Lord's time." Are you sure that you would attend to religion in the LORD'S time, if you only knew when that was ? There is not much use in talking with

a man, unless he is honest. Do you honestly think that you are waiting the Lord's time? Has the BIBLE any where told you thus to *wait* in your sins, for God to come and convert you? Where is the text that encourages such waiting? God, instead of calling on you *to wait*, commands you, in a voice like thunder, to *flee from the wrath to come*. Does he say to the sinner, *wait*? No; he says to him, "*Escape for thy life*, look not behind thee, nor stay thou in all the plains; *escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed*." Does this look as though God desired you to remain in your sins, till he does more for you than he has done? No; it appears that if he were to address you *personally*, he would say to you, as Lot did to his friends, "*Up, get you out of this place*." As to the *Lord's time*, that was when you were a little child. He came to you as soon as you knew *right* from *wrong*, and said, "Give me thy heart." And when you had grown older, and sinned against him during the years of childhood, he came to you again and said, "I love them that love me; and *they that seek me early shall find me*." That was the *Lord's time*. Ever since then you have been taking *your own time*. Lest, however, you should

despair of salvation, in consequence of having failed of becoming a Christian in the Lord's time—in childhood—"Again he *limiteth* a certain day, saying in David, *To-day if ye will hear his voice*, HARDEN NOT YOUR HEARTS." After God has waited, with so much long-suffering, for your repentance and reformation, and waited too in vain, you may still hear his voice, saying, "Behold, *now* is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation."

As God is now, "after so long a time," still ready to accept you, and give you salvation, will you any longer *insult* him, by pretending that you are waiting his time? You see it is not God's time you are waiting, but your *own*. You are *practically* declaring to the Almighty, "I do not like thy time for attending to religion; I mean to take my own time for it. To be sure, thou hast spared my life, and waited on me a long time; but that is nothing. Thou shalt continue to wait, till I get ready to repent and serve thee. When I am old, and infirm, and cannot enjoy life any longer; or when I see death approaching, then I will call for thee. And if thou art disposed to say to me then, 'Because I have called, and ye refused; I have

stretched out my hand, and no man regarded ; I also will laugh at your calamity, and though you call, I will not answer ;' still I will plead the promise, ' Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved ;' and unless thou save me, I shall say that thou hast not been as good as thy word." Ah, sinner, you will find that God is as good as his word. You will also find that his word did not bind him to hear, or save those, who have spent their lives in casting off fear, and neglecting prayer before him. You will find that " when the Master of the house has risen up and shut to the door, you will stand without, saying, Lord, ' Lord, open unto us, but he will answer and say unto you, ' I know you not ;' depart from me, ye workers of iniquity. Then will you see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of heaven, and you yourself thrust out." And you will see that you are excluded from the kingdom of God, because you *buried your talent*, because you would not *work in the Lord's vineyard*, because you *waited* in impenitence and unbelief, instead of *doing as God required*. If you would not fail of heaven, seek religion now. " Be wise *to-day* ; 'tis madness to defer !"

“Hasten, O sinner, to be wise,
And stay not for the morrow’s sun :
The longer wisdom you despise,
The harder is she to be won.
Oh, *hasten* mercy to implore,
And stay not for the morrow’s sun,
For fear thy season should be o’er
Before this evening’s course be run.
Hasten, O sinner, to return,
And stay not for the morrow’s sun,
For fear thy lamp should fail to burn
Before the needful work is done.”

SECTION XXVI.

If the thief found mercy at last, why may not I?

ANOTHER inquires, “If the penitent thief became a Christian just before he died, why may not I?” Should you find yourself on a dying bed without a preparation for eternity, you will doubtless find your mind in a poor state for commencing the great work of reconciliation to God. Such business needs a composed and vigorous mind. A mistake here would be fatal to your eternal interests. Would you be willing to venture into the presence of the holy, sin-hating God, with such kind of religion

as is usually embraced by sick people? I have heard aged ministers state that it was their deliberate opinion, formed after many years' observation in the sick chamber, that not one in twenty, (if even one in fifty,) of those, who express a hope in consequence of sick-bed exercises, is truly converted. If this be correct, if the mind is so enfeebled and disordered in consequence of bodily sickness, that those who think that they have experienced a change of heart under such circumstances, almost always deceive themselves; is it wise, or safe, to trust to sick-bed repentance? But if it were otherwise, if all those who indulge a hope of forgiveness under such circumstances, were truly converted, are you sure that you will have the privilege of lingering on a sick-bed before you die? Multitudes are "*driven away* in their wickedness," without any time for reflection, or repentance, or prayer. And are you not liable to die suddenly as well as others? Many are deprived of the use of their reason, before any serious apprehensions are entertained of their danger, so that they are in no situation to prepare to meet God. This may be the case with you.

You speak of the penitent thief, and ask why

you may not find mercy while dying as well as he? If your situation were like his, you might find mercy then. But it will be quite otherwise. He was an ignorant, prejudiced Jew, and had probably known nothing of Jesus, or the way of salvation through him, except what he had learned from Christ's enemies. And just as soon as Jesus told him who he was, and why he was shedding his blood, and where he was going after death, he at once embraces him as his Saviour, takes his part, reproves his impenitent companion, confesses his own sins, and begins to pray. No sooner is Christ offered to him, than he accepts the offer. His mind was not much, if any, affected by his pains, so that it was clear and vigorous, and capable of choosing and acting in a rational and consistent manner. How different from all this would it be with you! From infancy you have known the story of Christ's holy life, and vicarious sufferings and death, and that there is salvation in no other: and hundreds and hundreds of times you have been kindly and affectionately invited to repent and believe in Christ, that you might be saved: and you have read the Bible, and heard the prayers and exhortations of Christians, and had the strivings of the

Holy Spirit ; but you have madly turned away from all these pressing calls of mercy, so that it is a matter of doubt whether God would regard your bitter prayers, "when distress and anguish come upon you."

" Many call upon the Lord,
And find their cries *too late*."

Said a dying woman in the state of New-York :
" I once had a *call*, but I was then young, and fond of company, and thought I could not so soon consent to forsake the follies and amusements, and associates of my youth. I therefore said to the Lord, go thy way for this time ; when I am older I will call for thee ! My convictions left me. I was settled in life early, and have raised up a family without setting them a Christian example, or giving them religious instruction. And now, though I am dying without a hope of heaven, I have no heart to pray : for I have so abused the Lord, that I have no expectation of his hearing me, if I should attempt to pray. *It is now too late*." Many others, like this woman, find themselves sadly disappointed in expecting a more convenient season, after the time of childhood and youth is passed. They are often ashamed to

ask God to remember them in his kingdom, when they reflect how they have treated him during their whole lives. A sense of their cold-hearted indifference, and base ingratitude, and stubborn resistance, drives them to despair. I entreat you, therefore, not to put off to a dying bed the great business of life. "Acquaint now thyself with God, and be at peace," and thus secure eternal life. Heaven may *now* be within your reach, but *to-morrow* the door of mercy may be for ever shut against you. You will lose nothing valuable, but gain much, by becoming a Christian immediately. "If thou shalt be wise, thou shalt be wise *for thyself*; but if thou scornest, thou alone must bear it."

SECTION XXVII.

If I am to be saved, I shall be saved.

WE often meet with an individual who tells us, "If I am to be saved, I shall be saved, do what I will; and if not, I can't help it, do what I can." To such I would say, it is very true that you are entirely in the hands of God, and at his sovereign disposal. All that you ever

have done, or ever can do, will lay him under no obligations, on the score of law, to save you. The curse of the law is out against you as a transgressor. You can never repair the breach which your sins have made. And while it is true that you *cannot* be saved by the law, it is also true that you *will not* be saved by the Gospel, unless the Spirit of God interpose and *make you willing* to do what you *would not* otherwise do. The Lord Jesus Christ, by his sufferings and death, has provided salvation for the whole human family—has tasted death for every man. He has spread a royal feast, and is inviting mankind to a free participation of its blessings. His servants are directed to say to those that are bidden, "Come, for all things are now ready." But Christ's servants find that "they all with one consent begin to make excuse," and will not come to the Great Supper. This agrees with what our Lord told the unbelieving Jews: "*Ye will not come to me that ye might have life.*" "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings, but *ye would not.*" This unwillingness to come to Christ, is not peculiar to the Jews, but is universal among unconverted

men of all nations, and in all ages of the world. And so strong is this unwillingness, that all the motives of love and terror, of mercy and wrath, which the Gospel furnishes, if unaccompanied by a divine influence, will produce no more effect on the sinner, and come no nearer leading him to repentance, than the gentle breeze does on the sturdy oak, in uprooting it from its strong and ancient moorings. The sinner, at every period of his life, will have some pretended excuse for not *immediately* engaging in all Christian duties. This has always been, and will continue to be, the case with *you*, my impenitent reader, even till your very dying day, unless the Holy Spirit sweep away all your refuges of lies, and pluck you as a brand out of the fire. Now, whatever ability you have to "fear God and keep his commandments," (and your natural ability to do it I do not question,) or whatever ability you have to "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ," it is absolutely *certain that*, if God withhold his converting grace, you will go on in sin to the end of life, and then sink to hell. But while it is certain that you will eternally perish if God's gracious Spirit do not prevent, it is equally certain that you will not be crippled in your efforts for salvation, or

be shut out of heaven, (if you are disposed to serve the Lord,) by any purposes of the Almighty. Where, in any part of the Bible, does God tell sinners, "if they *are* to be saved they will be saved; if not, they can't help it?" Do you answer, that the apostle Paul says, God "hath mercy on whom he will have mercy; and whom he will he hardeneth?" ~ This is all true; but is this inconsistent with his having mercy on "all them that obey him?" (Heb. v. 9.) To be sure, "he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy;" but on whom *will* he have mercy? Will it be on "the willing and obedient," or on those who "refuse and rebel?" After the Almighty has said to mankind, "Look unto me and *be ye saved*, all the ends of the earth," would he be unwilling to save *any one*, or *every one*, who will look to him for salvation? After the Lord Jesus Christ has made the general proclamation, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely," can he exclude *any one* who is willing to come to him for life? No; God will have mercy on all those who will have mercy on themselves. Christ will confer salvation on "all them *that obey him*." If you, my unconverted reader, desire salvation, *do your duty*—believe in

Christ, and obey his commands, and salvation will be yours.

Perhaps you are ready to ask how I understand the expressions, "Whom he will, he hardeneth." Yes, he does harden whom he will. But who are they? Are they such as are disposed to do right—to love and obey the Lord? No; they are those who, like Pharaoh, resisted all the means, and motives, and influences, which God employs to soften and subdue their hearts. They are those who overlook the mercies, and disregard the judgments, of our kind Father in heaven. They are those who neglect, or despise the word of God, the holy Sabbath, the Lord's people, and the institution of religion. They are those who profane God's name, indulge their sensual appetites, disregard the admonitions of conscience, and resist the strivings of the Holy Spirit. And *how* does God *harden* those whom he *does* harden? By using means to soften and subdue them, and, when these means are misimproved and resisted, by letting sinners have their own way. Those same showers and dews and sunbeams, which make some portions of the earth soft and fruitful, cause other portions to bring forth tares and briers. So those same heavenly influences,

which subdue and sanctify and save "them that obey Christ," cause those who "do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness," to become harder and harder in sin.

And now, my dear friend, if you wish God to have mercy on *you*, give up your wicked excuses, your vile ingratitude, and all your sins, and repent and call upon God for mercy. I entreat you, "give diligence to make *your* calling and *your* election sure." The Bible does not tell you that if you are to be saved, you will be saved; and if not, you can't help it. It declares plainly, "He that *believeth* and is baptized, *shall be saved*; and *he that believeth not, shall be damned*." It says, "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and *saveth such as be of a contrite spirit*."

SECTION XXVIII.

I don't believe in hurrying.

IF there is a religious revival, or if meetings are more numerous than common, or if great anxiety is manifested by ministers and Christians for the salvation of sinners, one man is

ready to say, "I don't believe in hurrying things too fast." I would ask such what they call "*too fast*?" Men are in more danger of being too slow than too fast in becoming Christians. Two men started together from the hotel the other day, to take the steamboat, which was to leave at five o'clock. One of them looked at his watch and said, "We have no time to lose," and quickened his pace. "Don't be in haste," said the other, "I don't believe in hurrying things too fast," and kept on in his usual jog. The first one reached the boat just in time to get aboard before she left the wharf. The other arrived two minutes too late, and was left. Now, did the first hurry things too fast? When that man was drowning the other day, and his associates laid out all their strength to reach him with a boat, and just caught him by the hair as he was sinking the last time, and thus saved his life; did they hurry things too fast? When that house was burning in the night, and two resolute men stove in a window into one of the bed rooms, and found a man fast asleep and rescued him just as the flames burst into the apartment; did they hurry things too fast? When the angels took hold of Lot's hand to hasten his escape from Sodom, and told

him, "Escape for thy life," did they hurry things too fast? When Peter preached so powerfully on the day of Pentecost that a vast multitude of his hearers were pricked in their heart, and cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" did they hurry things too fast? When Peter urged them to immediate repentance and baptism, with the assurance that if they obeyed they should receive the gift of the Holy Ghost; did he hurry things too fast? And when the Apostles baptized three thousand on the very day of their conversion, did they hurry things too fast? When the Philippian jailer *sprang* into the prison where Paul and Silas were, at midnight, and came trembling, and fell down before them, and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" did he hurry things too fast? And when the Apostles said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" did they hurry things too fast? And when they baptized him "the same hour of the night;" did they hurry things too fast? While sinners, in these latter days, are continually exposed to "the damnation of hell," is it hurrying things too fast, to have extra meetings, protracted meetings, and inquiry meetings, and so forth, and to declare faithfully

the whole counsel of God? We wish to do all we can to save souls from eternal death. Some people may be converted under the ordinary means of grace, and others may require extra efforts to lead them to repentance. The Apostle intimates that the same means will not answer for all. He says, "Of some have compassion, making a difference; others save *with fear, pulling them out of the fire.*" Shall men be allowed to be in good earnest on every other subject but that of religion; and must they be restrained, and hampered, and kept down, and drawn back, when their zeal for God, and their desire for the salvation of their dying fellow-men, prompt them to holy ardour and vigorous effort to save souls from everlasting burnings? God says, "Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound an alarm in my holy mountain. Let the priests, the ministers of God, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, "Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thy heritage to reproach." Our blessed Patron once said to the Father, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." Elijah said, "I have been very zealous for the Lord of hosts." Zeal, to be sure, should be according to knowledge. But there should be *zeal*. Christ gave himself for us,

“that he might redeem us from all unrighteousness, and purify unto himself a *peculiar people, zealous of good works.*” Thousands will doubtless weep and wail forever, because they were not in sufficient haste to become Christians. None in eternity will ever lament that they “made haste and did not delay to keep God’s commandments.” Be entreated then, my dear reader, to be in *earnest* to secure the salvation of your soul.

“Seize the kind promise while it waits,
And march to Zion’s heavenly gates;
Believe, and take the promised rest;
Obey, and be forever blest.”

SECTION XXIX.

The eleventh hour.

ANOTHER harbours this excuse in his heart :
“I hope to live some time yet, and to enter the vineyard at the *eleventh hour.*” To such I would say, as to your living long, God has declared that “the wicked shall not live out half his days.” He says also, “Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day

may bring forth." Your hope of long life, and good days of worldly pleasure, may be frustrated, and your sun may go down at noon. Look out for that. But what leads you to hope that, even if you are spared to old age, you shall enter the vineyard at the eleventh hour? Do you learn of many doing it? How seldom is it that we hear of people becoming Christians in old age! It is true that in times of very great and powerful revivals, there are now and then cases of conversion among the aged. But how few are these cases compared with the multitudes of youth who are brought into the kingdom of heaven? The older men grow without religion, the less they are influenced by the motives of the Gospel. That portion of the earth, which is not made productive by the genial rays of the sun, is rendered harder and more barren by every day's warmth. So that heart, which is not melted into penitence and love by the kindly rays of the Sun of righteousness, is made more and more obdurate by its resistance of those rays. Old people find that their minds are less affected by hearing the Gospel preached, and by listening to the prayers of ministers and Christians, than they were years ago. Motives seem to have less power to

move them than formerly. They have become so accustomed to their own habits of thinking and reasoning, and acting (or rather, *not acting*) on the subject of religion, that it is like moving mountains to get them to attend to *any new thing*, especially if that thing is not agreeable to their inclinations. And as *religion* is never agreeable to the unregenerate heart, it is next to impossible to induce old people to become religious.

You speak of entering the vineyard at the *eleventh* hour: how do you know that the Lord will accept of your services at that late hour of the day? Do you say that our blessed Saviour speaks of the master of the vineyard hiring some at that hour? Very well; but who were those who found employment at that late hour? Were they persons who had been often invited to go into the vineyard during the day? If invited, had they manifested a reluctance to labour in the master's vineyard? Did they show that they desired to share the *wages*, rather than do the work of the vineyard? No, none of these things. When they were asked, "Why stand ye here all the day idle?" they promptly answered, "*Because no man hath hired us.*" They were heathen, who had ne-

ver heard the calls and invitations of the Gospel until the eleventh hour of their lives. Just as soon as they were told, "Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive;" they joyfully obeyed, and entered the vineyard. Now, is their case like yours? Can you honestly say that the reason why you have not entered the Lord's service, and become a Christian before, is "because you have not been invited?" Think of the sermons and exhortations which you have heard from childhood up to the present time. Think of the Sabbaths you have violated, and the afflictions you have misimproved. Think of the many Christian privileges with which you have been favoured. Think of those kind whisperings of the Spirit with which you have so often been visited. Now, can you think, in view of these things, that you will stand as good a chance to be received at the eleventh hour, as those poor, ignorant heathen, who entered the vineyard as soon as invited? Certainly not. Your case is widely different from theirs. You have long known *your duty*, but a love of sin, and a dislike of holiness, have prevented your doing it. Read the tract entitled "Quench not the Spirit," and you will find the account of a man standing

by the gate of the vineyard at the eleventh hour. His expectation of entering it is forever cut off. In his younger days, the Holy Spirit whispered in his ear, at different times, "*Seek religion now.*" But when God called, he refused to obey, and put off religion till a more convenient season. And now, on his death bed, he sees and acknowledges his error, and advises his children and grandchildren, not to do as he had done ; and gives them to understand that he expects to spend his eternity in using this affecting language of despair : "*The harvest is past ; the summer is ended ; and I am not saved.*" I pray you, therefore, my dear reader, talk not about the *eleventh hour*. Enter the Lord's vineyard immediately, whatever hour of your day it is.

"Attend the offered grace *to-day*,
Nor lose the blessing by delay."

"Procrastination is the thief of time—the kidnapper of souls—the recruiting officer of hell."

SECTION XXX.

I have a hope.

WE sometimes meet with a person, whose mind has at some former period been excited on the subject of religion, but who has never come out on the Lord's side, as every Christian ought to do. When we urge upon him the necessity of an interest in Christ, he looks us in the face, and says, "I have a hope." To such I would reply, so has every *hypocrite* this side the bottomless pit. Can you find a man of your acquaintance who has not a hope of salvation? If you can find one without a hope, you find a miserable being. You say you have a hope. Very well. The apostle says we should be ready to give *a reason* of the hope that is in us. Can you give a good reason for your hope? "Every tree is known by its fruit." Does your hope bring forth *good* fruit? Does it lead you daily to pray and search the Scriptures? If you have a family, does your hope lead you to maintain morning and evening worship with your household? Does it lead you to be regular at meetings, not only on the Sabbath but on week-days? Does it lead you

always to practise unbending integrity and strict honesty in your dealings with others? Does it lead you to a strict observance of the Sabbath, and a devout reverence of the name, and ordinances, and house of God? Does your hope lead you to seek to be *pure*, in heart, speech, and behaviour, even as God is pure? Does it lead you to converse and pray with the unconverted? Does it lead you to hunger and thirst for the ordinances of the visible Church? If you have a hope, why not profess Christ before the world, and seek to be connected with his visible body? If one denomination does not suit you, why not seek communion with another? Do you feel satisfied while disregarding the plain and positive command of Christ, "*This dō*, in remembrance of me?" Consider that "He that is born of God *sinneth not*;" that is, he will not allow himself *to live in any sin*, either of omission or of commission. If your hope allows you to live months and years out of the visible Church, without making any effort to gain admittance, have you not reason to apprehend that it is the hope of the hypocrite, *which shall perish* in the giving up of the ghost, or in death? I judge you not. I have proposed these questions that you may judge cor

rectly concerning yourself. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption." "Let him *that thinketh he standeth*, take heed lest he fall." If you have not hope enough to bring you out on the Lord's side, may you not fear that you have not hope enough to carry you to heaven? If your hope does not lead you to forsake every unholy practice, and to live soberly, and righteously, and godly in the world, have you not occasion to tremble lest it is built upon the sand? Those who have hope enough to keep them easy and careless, but not enough to bring them up to the standard of Christian duty, are in an awfully dangerous state. The faithful and pointed preaching of the word passes by them on either side, without taking effect. When Christians are addressed, they suppose the address is intended for *professors* of religion, and not for them, and therefore they do not appropriate the searching appeals to themselves. Thus the truth, which if applied by them to their own case, would show them the *fallacy* of their hope, passes by on the right side. And when the impenitent are addressed by such probing truth, as is calculated to convince them of their guilt and danger,

and to induce them to fly to Christ for salvation, they apprehend that the address is **not** meant for them, (as they hope that they are Christians,) and therefore they let it pass them on the other side. Thus these persons are apparently in more danger of losing their souls, than either self-deceived professors *in* the Church, or unconverted sinners *out* of the Church. In fact, these persons, who have "a hope that maketh ashamed, because the love of God is not shed abroad in their hearts," are almost sure of destruction, if they remain where they are. They have just hope enough to lead them to cry "peace and safety" to themselves, till sudden destruction cometh upon them. They have not hope enough to raise them to heaven, but just enough to sink them to hell.

If you, my dear reader, are resting on a hope, which does not lead you to seek a standing among Christ's open and professed friends, and which does not lead you to live as the Bible requires Christians to live, I entreat you to cease to rest upon it, but cast it away as you would a broken staff where you may procure a good one, or as you would a rotten rope where you can get a strong one, if you choose, with which

to let yourself down into a well. Go with true penitence and lively faith to the Lord Jesus Christ, that he may be "formed in you the hope of glory." You will then have "a hope which will be as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, entering into that within the vail, whither Jesus the Forerunner is for us entered." (Heb. vi. 18, 20.) And then if you continue to live in the exercise of Christian feelings, and in the faithful performance of all Christian duties, you may attain "the full assurance of hope," and be prepared for that world,

"Where faith is sweetly lost in sight,
And hope, in full supreme delight,
And everlasting love."

SECTION XXXI.

I mean to live differently.

WHEN the Holy Spirit is operating on the minds of men, either in a time of revival, or during a season of affliction, or at any other time, they see their past course has been sinful, and some of their sins trouble their minds. It is common for a man, under these circumstances, to say, "I mean to live a different life from

what I have done." To such I would say, I am very glad that you see your need of a reformation. A sense of our past deficiencies is the first step toward religion. If, by saying, "you mean to live differently," you mean to convey the idea that you are determined to become a Christian, and lead a Christian life, it is the best thing you can do. I should rejoice if all the world would do differently in this way. But I fear you do not mean all this. I fear that you mean simply to forsake *some* of your evil ways, and to attend more strictly to *some external duties*, and that you design in this way to appease the displeasure of God, and to quiet your own conscience. I have often met with persons, who expressed themselves in the language of this excuse, who were not at all determined to make religion their great concern, but simply meant to pursue a course which would occasion their conscience less trouble. But it is evident that almost every person may reform in some respects, and still come no nearer religion than he was before. Every one can see that the thief, the drunkard, the swearer, the adulterer, the gambler, the Sabbath-breaker, and so forth, may abandon their peculiar, besetting sin, and still be no nearer religion than

the rest of mankind who were never guilty of these sins. And so the prayerless person may commence something in the form of prayer, the indifferent may be serious, the thoughtless become thoughtful, those who have neglected to read the Bible may begin to read it, and those who have neglected the sanctuary, may be found in the house of God, and after all, these different persons may remain in love with sin, and at enmity with the Gospel. God says to those, who think that religion consists in outward reformations and external duties, "*Rend your hearts*, and not your garments: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his *thoughts*; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

When God requires *repentance* and *faith*, (internal and holy exercises,) he will not be put off with *external* reformations and *outward* duties. When he commands us to "*believe in the Lord Jesus Christ*," in order to salvation, he will not accept the renunciation of Atheism, or Deism, or Universalism, or Unitarianism, in the place of faith in Christ. Men may renounce these and all other forms of doctrinal error, and still be as destitute of saving faith as the great

adversary himself. True faith, when exercised by man, exerts a purifying influence on the *heart* as well as the life. Where faith is in the heart, there is the *salt* which is to cleanse the fountain of moral action. Till the fountain is cleansed by the salt of divine grace, its streams are all, like itself, filthy and hateful. But when the fountain is thus cleansed, its streams become more and more clear and healthful. Giving up evil habits and erroneous sentiments, while repentance and faith are not exercised, is like trying to cleanse the streams, while the fountain remains corrupt and poisonous. Both the fountain and its streams need cleansing. But the way to accomplish it, is to clean out the fountain *first*, and this will then send out clear and sweet water in the streams. So says our blessed Saviour, "Make the tree good, and the fruit will be good." And again he says, "Cleanse *first* that which is *within* the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also."

And now, my unconverted reader, let me tell you plainly that your resolution to do differently, (unless it goes the whole length of Joshua's, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord,") is worse than nothing. It cries, "Peace,

peace," to you, while you ought to realize that you have no ground for thinking yourself at peace with God. It quiets your conscience, when it would be far better for you, if conscience were much more troublesome than it is. If, instead of quieting conscience, by a resolution of partial obedience, you would let conscience drive you to the pure fountain of Christ's blood, conscience would thereby be cleansed from dead works, and you would thus be prepared to serve God *in spirit* and *in truth*. If you are not a Christian, you ought to *do* differently, and *feel* differently, and *be* different from what you now are. I beseech you, therefore, "Amend your ways and your doings that are not good," and present yourself "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

SECTION XXXII.

I have a good mind to undertake it.

SAYS the man, whose judgment is convinced that religion is the one thing needful, but whose heart still cleaves to this world: "I have a

good mind to undertake it." To such I would say, so had Agrippa a good mind to undertake it, when he said to Paul: "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." Multitudes are, at times, almost persuaded to attend to religion. Our blessed Saviour, when in this world, met with a man of this character, and said to him: "Thou art not far from the kingdom of heaven." But it will be well for you to remember, that many come *near* the kingdom, who never enter. When they feel their need of an interest in Christ, they allow some excuse to enter their minds, which prevents their making suitable efforts to become Christians. Their seriousness is thus worn off, and their minds become less and less susceptible of religious impressions. They vainly imagine, that another time will be more convenient to attend to religion than the present. They know, and sometimes *feel*, that religion is all-important, and the thought that they are liable to die without it, often fills their minds with very great uneasiness. But they see many supposed difficulties in the way of their *now* becoming Christians, and are disposed to think that these difficulties will be fewer, and easier overcome, at a future period. They, therefore, say to their convictions, and to

the Holy Spirit, which occasions their convictions : "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." But, alas ! a convenient season for a wicked heart to "cease to do evil, and learn to do well," never comes ; and thus "Wisdom is pushed out of life." How many of this description will mourn at the last, when they are consumed in the flames of perdition, and say : "How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof !" If you find yourself at all disposed to become religious, *now is your time*. It is God's good spirit working in you "to will and to do" —reproving you of sin, and saying to you : "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for *why will ye die ?*" The Holy Spirit never visits men but to do them good ; and as he is now breathing a hallowed influence over your soul, and trying to lead you to repent, and secure the salvation of your never-dying spirit, be cautious how you disregard his gentle whispers. You may be sure that true religion will do you no harm ; and if you have "a good mind to undertake it," it very likely is *NOW OR NEVER* with you. You may not feel to-morrow as you do now. Yea, you may never have a return of these feelings, if you grieve them away now.

Remember, it is God's Spirit that makes us feel at all serious, and he has said that his "Spirit shall not always strive with man." If, therefore, you have any serious impressions on your mind at the present time, do not get rid of them, as you value your soul's eternal welfare. In the affecting language of Paul to Agrippa : "I would to God that you were not only *almost*, but *altogether persuaded to be a Christian*."

SECTION XXXIII.

I don't like to pledge myself.

WHEN we converse with the impenitent on personal religion, and urge home upon their conscience the claims of God, we often ask them, Will you not now determine to give your heart to God, and serve him? We sometimes receive this answer : "I don't like to *pledge myself* to do it." Why not pledge yourself? If your mind is made up, why not say so? This unwillingness to bind yourself to do your duty, indicates that your mind is still wavering, that you are not fully decided to be for God, and none else. As long as you are undecided,

your mind in a state of suspense, you will do nothing to any purpose. God puts to you this solemn question : "How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him ; but if Baal, then follow him." Have you not lived in disobedience to God long enough? After God has waited so long a time for you to *commence* serving him, can you have the boldness to ask him to wait longer? Does not even the thought make you blush? When will you be ready to give your heart to the Lord, and to commence serving him? In ten years? In five? In one? God asks you to decide the matter at once—"this day," and he is waiting for your decision. I pray you, decide *now*, and decide right. But do you say : "My mind is settled on the subject; I do mean to attend to religion ; but I do not like to pledge myself to repent *this moment*." How long a time do you want to repent in? Did not the three thousand, on the day of Pentecost, and the jailer of Philippi, take time enough to repent in? They did it *at once*, and we have no evidence but that it was as well done, as though they had taken months for it. Repentance does not so much require *time*, as a *disposition*. When this is *right*, the work of repentance is de-

spatched "*off hand*." The great thing necessary to its accomplishment, is *determination*. Men never accomplish any thing important without determination—a determination, which prompts to action. When a man has an important business-matter to attend to, he determines promptly, and without hesitation, *to do it*. He is not afraid to say, *I will*. When you give your note for any amount, or when you promise to pay a neighbour what you owe him, you *pledge yourself* to do something by a given time. If you are not afraid to pledge yourself to do your duty, in *temporal* things, why are you in *spiritual*? If you ever become a Christian, you will have first to pledge yourself. No man can become religious, without engaging to do his duty. No man submits to God, without a determination to do it. No man ever accepted of Christ, without a determination to do it *now*. Sinners have to feel themselves *shut up* to duty, before they can be induced to do it. A man cannot become a Christian, as long as his mind is undecided whether to submit to God *now*, or at a future time. Whenever a sinner submits himself to God's disposal, it is done immediately following a determination *now* to submit. If you have any notion of becoming a

Christian, you can see, therefore, what you must come to. You must be willing to *pledge* yourself. No person, who has not nerve enough to say, *I will now submit to God, and accept of Christ as my SUBSTITUTE and SAVIOUR*, need expect to reach heaven. I beseech you then to *determine* now to serve God, and trust in Christ. Adopt the language of the Prodigal, and say: "I *will* arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am not worthy to be called thy son." Do this sincerely, and it will be said of you, as it was of him: "And he arose and came to his father." Pledge yourself like good old Joshua: "As for me and my house, *we will serve the Lord.*" It is not enough that you *resolve* to repent, you must resolve to repent *now*, and follow your resolution to repent, by *repenting immediately*.

Let this be the sincere language of your *heart*, and your *action*,

"Welcome, welcome, dear Redeemer,
 Welcome to this heart of mine;
 Lord, *I make a full surrender*,
 Every power and thought be thine;
 Thine entirely,
 Through eternal ages, thine."

SECTION XXXIV.

I cannot do any thing.

WE often meet with people, who have heard the sentiments advanced, that sinners cannot do any thing to *merit* forgiveness and salvation ; and they infer from this, that unconverted persons have nothing to do, but sit still and wait paitently for God to come along and make them Christians. Urge them to repent and believe the Gospel, and they individually say, "I can't do any thing." This impression, that they can do nothing, goes with them where they go, and stays with them where they stay. It presents an impervious shield against all obligations of duty. It doubtless proves the ruin of thousands. If any of my readers are labouring under the impression that they cannot do any thing towards becoming a Christian, and preparing for heaven, I would say a few words to you in regard to that impression. Where did you get that impression ? Did you get it from *man*, or from *God* ? Did you get it from ministers or Christians, or from the word of God ? This impression, that you can do nothing, I am fully convinced, is *erroneous*,

and awfully dangerous. The reason why I believe that it is *erroneous*, is because God is a God of sincerity and truth; and he conveys the idea very clearly and repeatedly, in the Bible, that it is the sinner's duty to do something. This idea he conveys in such passages as the following. Ezek. xxxiii. 10, 11: "Therefore, O thou son of man, speak unto the house of Israel; thus ye speak, saying, If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live? Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: *turn ye, turn ye*, from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Isaiah, lv. 6, 7: "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Mark, i. 15: "Repent ye, and believe the Gospel." Acts ii. 37, 38: "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said

unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Acts xvi. 30, 31: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shall be saved." Ezek. xviii. 30, 32: "Repent and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed: and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves and live ye." In these, and many other similar portions of Scripture, God conveys the idea, that the wicked have *something, yea, much, to do*. Look again at the jailer's inquiry, and Paul's answer. He asks a plain question, "Sirs, what must I *do* to be saved?" He had got the impression that there was something for him *to do*, and he asks *what it was*. If Paul had embraced the notion, that the sinner "can't do any thing," here was an excellent opportunity to have stated it. If he had been of that opinion, he probably would have answered the

jailer's inquiry thus: "You ask what you must *do* to be saved? *Do?* You *can't do* any thing." But Paul shows that he did not embrace this *do-nothing-system*. He honestly told the trembling sinner that *he had something to do*. That he *must* do something. He said to him, "*Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ*, and thou shalt be saved." And when our Saviour says, "He that *believeth* and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that *believeth not*, shall be damned," he conveys the idea, that sinners have *something to do*, in order to be saved; and that if they do not *do* that something, they will be damned as the consequence of not doing it. And when he says, "*Except ye repent, ye shall perish*," he clearly conveys the idea that sinners *must do something, or perish*, as the consequence of not doing it.

Now, my dear reader, whatever has been your impression about your having nothing to do, you see that God requires you *to do much*. He requires you to *repent*, and *believe in Christ*, and *forsake your evil ways*, and *evil thoughts*, and *seek the Lord*, and *return* unto him, and *call* upon him, and *turn yourself* from all your transgressions, and *make you a new heart and a new spirit*. You must, therefore, settle the

matter with God, if you still say, "I can't do any thing." You are hastening to his awful bar, and "what wilt thou say when he shall punish thee?" Will you dare say that you wanted salvation, but could do nothing to obtain it? "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap: He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting." You say "you can't do any thing!" Alas! you *have* done something. You have done *too much*. You have *sinned* against the Lord *times* and *ways* without number. Yes, you *have done too much*—done enough to sink you to hell for ever. Besides sinning against God's *law*, you have neglected and slighted the Gospel of God our Saviour. You have abused God's mercies, temporal and spiritual. You have misimproved his chastisements. You have disregarded the admonitions of your own conscience. You have resisted the Holy Spirit. Yes, you have done much, very much, which you *ought not to have done*. And now, when God commands you to do something which you *ought to do*, does it look well for you to say, "I *can't* do any thing?" I beseech you never

to say it again. But when God commands you to do a thing, *do it*. Christ has become "the author of eternal salvation to all them *that obey him*." Obey him, then, and you shall be saved.

SECTION XXXV.

There are so many denominations.

WE sometimes meet with persons who tell us, "There are so many different denominations of Christians, who knows which is right?" To the unconverted person who makes this inquiry, I would say, you have the Bible, and if you study that with a sincere desire to be guided into all truth, you will not be likely to make a *fatal* mistake in this matter. But you misapprehend Christians and ministers, if you suppose, when they urge you to come into the kingdom of heaven, that they are asking you to join *their* church. Joining a church is an *after* consideration. When we invite you to seek the Lord—to give him your heart—to become a Christian—we say nothing to you about *churches*. Your first business is "to make

your own calling and election sure." You should not suffer your mind to be agitated by the differences between the churches, until you gain a satisfactory evidence that you are "a new creature;" that you have experienced "the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost;" that "old things are done away with you, and all things have become new." When you experience "Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, good faith, meekness, and temperance," then you may feel warranted in searching the Scriptures, to see for yourself, which denomination comes the nearest to the pattern there given. The difference between the various denominations of Evangelical Christians is not fundamental. God owns them all, and sends his reviving and sanctifying Spirit upon them all. This he would not do, if they were indulging essential error. If you are truly converted, I would advise you to offer yourself to that church where you will feel most at home, and where you think you will be the most happy and useful. "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."

SECTION XXXVI.

I cannot get religion.

WE have occasionally conversed with persons who said, "I would be glad to have religion, but I can't get it." I would say to such, if this were really the case with you, you ought to be pitied, rather than blamed, for not being a Christian. But is it truly so? Would you really be glad to have religion? I find many who would be glad to have peace and happiness, who, nevertheless, are as far from desiring *religion* as can be. And I have known some, who *thought* that they really desired religion, when, in fact, they only desired its *benefits*. This may be the case with my impenitent reader. You can ascertain whether you really desire religion, or not, by noticing what your desire leads you to do. When men really and truly desire a thing, they use all proper means to obtain it. The husbandman, who desires a good harvest, breaks up his fallow ground—sows his seed—fences his field, and then patiently waits for the early and latter rain. The youth, who desires a thorough education, pursues his studies with diligence and perse-

verance. The traveller, who desires to be at a particular place, goes in that direction. Paul shows that he really desired the salvation of Israel, by labouring incessantly to bring them to Christ. When the trembling jailor inquired what he must do to be saved, and was told to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, he showed that he really desired salvation, by his following Paul's direction, and exercising faith in Christ. Unless your desire of salvation, leads you to repent, and believe in Christ, and live a life of prayer, and attend religious meetings, and read the Bible, and keep the Sabbath, and reverence God's name, and endeavour to serve God in sincerity and in truth, you have reason to conclude that your desire is for the "loaves and fishes"—the *benefits* of religion rather than for religion itself. If you truly desire religion, what hinders your having it? Religion is *serving God*, with a right state of feeling towards Him; or, it is loving God with all your heart, and your neighbour as yourself, *and acting accordingly*. Now, do you sincerely love and serve the Lord, and seek the happiness of your fellow creatures? If you do, you *have* religion already. But if not, can you honestly say, "you want religion, but can't get

it?" What does God require of you that you cannot do? Do you say, "I can't repent?" Why not? Repentance is to "break off your sins by righteousness, and your iniquities by turning unto the Lord." What hinders you doing this? Can you not cease to do evil, and learn to do well? Can you not think on your ways, be sorry for your sins, and turn your feet unto God's testimonies? Well, when you have done these things, *you have repented*. When God *commands* you to repent, and says, "Except ye repent, ye shall perish:" does He require impossibilities, and threaten the non-performance with perdition? It is blasphemous to suppose it. Does our blessed Saviour say, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," and, "whosoever will, let him take of the waters of life freely," when men *cannot* accept of his kind invitation?—*cannot* come to Him?—*cannot* take the water of life? Has he provided this great Supper for our world, and sent out his servants to say to mankind, "Come, for all things are now ready;" when the children of men might all, with truth and propriety, say, as the one who had married a wife did say, "I CANNOT COME? It is absurd and wicked to in-

dulge such a thought. As long as you think that God requires impossibilities, you will think of him as a *tyrant*, and, of course, you will not, and *cannot* love him. And as long as you feel that you *cannot* repent, (though God commands all men to repent,) you are not in a state of mind to become a Christian, but are in an attitude of rebellion against God. You need not expect God to have mercy on you, till you acknowledge that *HE is right*, and *you are wrong*. You must have such confidence in the wisdom and benevolence of God, as to *feel* that what he requires is reasonable. You must acknowledge that what God *commands* to be done, *ought* to be done; and what *ought* to be done, *can* be done. And as God *now commands all men*—you among the rest—to *repent*, they and *you ought now to repent*; and as *you ought now to repent*, *you can now repent*. And as you can now repent, *do it*, and heaven shall be yours. But “except you repent, you shall perish.” May God have mercy on you, and give you a speedy repentance, for the sake of Christ, his well beloved Son. Amen.

CHAPTER X.

THE SERVANT MAKES HIS REPORT TO THE MASTER.

AFTER the great Supper was made ready, and the servant sent out to invite the guests ; and after the discouragements with which he met, in their unsatisfactory excuses, “the servant came and showed his Lord these things.” Said the prophet, after delivering God’s message to David, “Now therefore advise thyself what word I shall bring again to him that sent me.” The servants, the ministers of Christ, “watch for souls as they that must give an account.” After delivering the message of God on the Sabbath, they go home to their closets, and report to their master the visible effects produced by his message. Often they are constrained to enter complaints to the Lord, of their ill success. Sometimes they ask, “Who hath believed our report?—and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?” They, often despondingly, say, “We have laboured in vain, and spent our strength for

nought." None but ministers know a minister's feelings, under such circumstances: "The heart knoweth his own bitterness." No office or station in this world is attended with such crushing responsibility. Says an inspired minister of Jesus, "We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are a savour of life unto life; and to the other, of death unto death: and who is sufficient for these things?" Often, besides being unsuccessful in their efforts to induce men to come to the Gospel feast, they are blamed, and vilified, and slandered, and persecuted, by the very persons whose welfare they are seeking. Christ told his ministers that they must expect this. He said, "If they have persecuted me, they will persecute you also." And they often know by experience that, "If any man will live godly in Christ Jesus, he shall suffer persecution." They are often called fanatics, and fools, and madmen, and are accused of turning "the world upside down." "Marvel not," said the Lord, "if the world hate you." But they care not for ill-treatment and reproach, if they can but induce men to come to the Great Supper. Though they tell their Master how sinners treat his invitations

of mercy, yet they harbour no ill-will towards sinners, or even towards their enemies; nor would they "command fire to come down from heaven to consume them;" but they pray for them, and persevere in their efforts to do them good.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MASTER IS ANGRY AT THE EVIL REPORT.

WHEN the servant reported how those, who were bidden to the Great Supper, all made excuses, and refused to come, the master of the house was *angry*. Who can wonder at it? was there not a just cause for anger? He had been at great expense and trouble to do them good, and they treat his Supper with disrespect and contempt. No wonder he feels indignant. "God is angry with the wicked every day." And the blessed Saviour, who has done so much to provide salvation for the lost, is angry when men make excuses for not loving and serving him—when they refuse to come at his bidding, and receive the Gospel Supper—when they neglect this great salvation. Yes, when to save men from *perishing eternally*, he made himself of no reputation, took upon himself human nature, spent a life of toil and reproach and sorrow in doing good to the bodies and souls of men, and finally gave himself a sacrifice for

our sins, by enduring the shameful death of the cross—all this for the benefit of our race—when, I say, after all these provisions are made at such an infinite expense, men are invited to come to the Gospel feast, and eat and live forever—to come and love and obey this kind Saviour—how must HE *feel* towards those who coldly say, “I pray thee have me excused.” No wonder Jesus looks round upon such with *anger*, being grieved at the hardness of their hearts.” O, remember this, ye who are slighting the Great Supper. Every time you are invited to become a Christian, whether the invitation be given publicly or privately; whether it be given by a Gospel minister, or private Christian; whether it be read in the Bible, or a religious book or tract; whether it be given by mercies, or afflictions, or conscience, or the Holy Spirit; if you disregard that invitation, the blessed Saviour himself *is angry with you*. And he will remain angry with you forever, unless you repent, and come to him for life, while you are in this world. “Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.” If you continue to neglect and slight the Gospel Supper, you will find yourself among that de-

spairing multitude, who will hide "themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains ; and will say to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from *the wrath of the Lamb* ; for the great day of his wrath is come , and who shall be able to stand ? "

CHAPTER XII.

THE MASTER DETERMINES TO SUPPLY HIS SUPPER WITH GUESTS.

WELL, what did the master of the house *do*, when the servant informed him how those, who were bidden, had treated his invitation? Did he give up having his feast? "No," he said to the servant, "go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind." If the *wise* and *prudent*, the *mighty* and the *noble* of this world, refuse to come to the Great Supper, it will be seen that the master can get along without them. They who are bidden, often show by their indifference and contempt that they are *not worthy*. Let land-buyers, and oxen-buyers, and newly married people, stay away from the Great Supper, *if they will*; others will gladly occupy the seats which were offered to them, and of which they show themselves so unworthy by their trifling excuses. Those whom the world look upon as *foolish*

and *weak*, and *base*, and *despicable*, and as *things that are not* ; yes, “the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind,” are *called* to partake of those rich and excellent provisions of mercy, which the wealthy, the proud, and the honourable, too often slight and disregard. “That which is highly esteemed among men, is abomination in the sight of God ;” and often that which is highly esteemed in the sight of God, is abomination among men. “God seeth not as man seeth.” O ye self-righteous moralists, be it known unto you, that publicans and harlots shall go into the kingdom of heaven before you. The ministers of Christ are commonly more successful among the poor, the despised, and the immoral, than among the rich and honourable of the earth. Comparatively few among the rulers of the Jews, or among the Pharisees and Sadducees, believe in Jesus. It is not so great a stoop for a poor man to become humble and childlike, as it is for the rich and honourable.

But let it be remembered, that if those who attend meetings and hear the invitations of the Gospel from Sabbath to Sabbath, will not accept offered mercy, the servants of Christ must go from house to house, through the streets and

lanes of the cities and villages, and through the distant and neglected neighbourhoods of every town, and bring into the sanctuary of God, into the Sabbath-school, into the arms of Jesus, and into the bosom of the Church, the poor, the ignorant, the careless, the neglectful, and the depraved. *Every* servant of HIM who "went about doing good,"—*every Christian*—is commissioned to do this all-important, but greatly neglected work. Followers of Emanuel, servants of the great Master, here is work for you all. "*Preach the Gospel to every creature.*" Fill your *hands* with Bibles and tracts and good books, and your *mouths* with arguments, and go out quickly and bring in to the Gospel Supper, "the poor, the maimed, the halt, and blind." The Master is determined that the Supper shall be furnished with guests. Let every one do *his* part to furnish it, and, with the help of the Master, it will soon be done.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SERVANT DOES AS COMMANDED.

Who of Christ's servants—ministers, or private Christians—can honestly say, (in reference to bringing neglecters into the kingdom of heaven,) as the servant in this parable did, "Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded?" Christian reader, have you faithfully and affectionately invited every sinner in your neighbourhood, to come to the Gospel Supper? Have you "warned every man night and day, with tears?" Have you gone forth "weeping, bearing precious seed?" Have you "sown your seed in the morning, and in the evening?" Have you borne in mind the encouragement held out by the apostle, that "he that converteth a sinner from the error of his ways, shall save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins?" Are there not some individuals, within a little distance of your dwelling, who might justly say, (if others have done no more than you have,) "No man cared for my soul?" Or, can you honestly say, "I am free from the blood of all men?" "Lord, I have done as thou hast commanded."

CHAPTER XIV.

YET THERE IS ROOM.

AFTER the servant had faithfully performed his duty, and brought in as many as he could from the streets and lanes of the city, there were still seats unoccupied at the table. The servant, therefore, said to his master, "Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, *and yet there is room.*" My unconverted reader, is this not an announcement which fills you with joy? There is room enough, even for *you*, at this late hour. *Room*, in the pardoning mercy of God—*room*, in the compassion and blood of Christ—*room*, in the loving-kindness of the Holy Spirit—*room*, in the rejoicing of angels—*room*, in the communion of saints—*room*, in the visible Church—and *room*, in the mansions of glory. Yet there is room! Room sufficient, so that sinners of every nation, of all shades of complexion, of every grade, of every variety of character, and of every different age in life, may find a seat at this Great Supper. Though

thousands and millions have already come, and are sharing the privileges of this feast, yet there is room for thousands and millions of others. Abraham and all the pious patriarchs, Isaiah and all the holy prophets, David and all the devout kings, Paul and all the inspired apostles, and all true believers, in ages past and present, have taken their seats at this royal banquet. But, though so many have come in, "yet there is room." None will stay away and starve, for want of room at the Gospel table. Christ gave his flesh for the life of *the world*—to furnish a supper, sufficient for every son and daughter of Adam—"that *whosoever* believeth in him might not perish, but have eternal life."

CHAPTER XV.

THE BLESSING OF THE FEAST TO BE URGED UPON ALL.

AFTER the servant in the parable had collected as many of the poor, distressed objects of charity out of the streets and lanes of the city as he could, and informed his master that there was yet room, his lord said unto him, "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled: For I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden, shall taste of my Supper." By this we learn that Christ's servants must not confine their efforts for the salvation of men, to their own city, or town, or village, or neighbourhood, but should feel an interest in the whole human family, and should exert themselves, according to their ability, to bring all men to Christ and to heaven. They are sometimes under the painful necessity of saying to Gospel hardened sinners, "Seeing ye judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the

Gentiles." If sinners in one place will not come to the Gospel Supper, those in another may. And if sinners in highly privileged places will not listen to the voice of mercy, those in destitute places may. And if sinners in a Christian land turn their backs upon the means of grace, Christ's servants are authorized to shake off the dust of their feet against them, and direct their efforts to the conversion of the heathen. Yes, says their Master, "Begin at Jerusalem," and "go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SEATS MUST ALL BE OCCUPIED.

THOSE who, by birth and education, seemed to be the children of the kingdom, will, in many instances, be cast out; while others will be brought in from the highways and hedges, from the east and the west, from the north and the south, to fill the places of those who "prove themselves unworthy of everlasting life." The Master is determined that his house shall be filled. And if some who are invited to the Supper will not come, others will. The Master has influence enough to fill his house with worthy guests. Every seat will be occupied. God says to his Son, the good Master, "*Thy people shall be willing* in the day of thy power." Christ will not be disappointed in his plans to promote his own glory, and the good of his people. If, my dear reader, you will come to his feast of love, *well*: but if not, Christ will be glorified by you in some other way.

CHAPTER XVII.

COMPEL THEM TO COME IN.

THE Master said to the servant, "Compel them to come in." How could one *compel* many? Could he lay hold of them and *force* them in, contrary to their own wills? No; the force which he could use in bringing them in, was not physical, but *moral*. It was the force of truth, of argument, of persuasion, and of entreaty. This is the kind of compulsion which Christ's servants are authorized to use, in bringing sinners to the Great Supper. This is the only force which can make men *willing* to come to Christ for eternal life. This is the kind of force which Paul used in converting men. He says, "Knowing the terror of the Lord, we *persuade* men." Though he "reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come"—though he often drew his arguments from "*the terror of the Lord*"—yet he does not, even with such mighty weapons, expect to *drive*, or *force* men to become Chris-

tians. He only persuades them. Under his reasonings and persuasions, "Felix trembled," and Agrippa said, "Almost thou *persuadest* me to be a Christian." If sinners will not come to the Gospel Supper under the *compulsion* of truth, reason, persuasion, argument, and entreaty, accompanied by the Holy Spirit, they will never come at all. This is the only kind of *compulsion* which God ever employs, or which he authorizes his servants ever to employ, to bring men into the kingdom of Christ. But this kind of force all of Christ's servants should use continually with their fellow men, to induce them to accept of salvation. They should "preach the word ; be instant in season and out of season ; warn, reprove, and rebuke with all long-suffering." They should preach the word publicly, and from house to house, and compel men to come to the Great Supper. They should compel them by their good example, by entreaties, by warnings, by exhortations, by tears, and by prayers. They should follow them to their various avocations—to their farms, their shops, their stores, their houses, their offices, their mills—yea, "into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE MASTER CAN DO WITHOUT THOSE WHO WILL
NOT COME.

BUT if any are still begging to be excused, and will not be thus compelled to come in, let them know that they are injuring themselves more than they are any one else. Let those, who are despising or neglecting religion, or begging to be excused from attendance on the Lord's banquet, *remember* that the Master can get along very well without *them*—much better than they can get along without HIM—and much better than they can get along without the provisions of the Gospel Supper. The Master is perfectly independent of them, but they are not independent of him. Let those who are staying away, *remember*, that every day and every hour that they delay coming to this Great Supper, and by every excuse which they make for not coming, they are provoking Christ to swear in his wrath that they shall not taste of his Supper. Hereafter, many of those, who are now so backward about coming to this feast, may feel their need of its provisions, and may come to the Mas-

ter's door, and knock and beg for admittance, when it is forever too late. "When once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without and knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out." (Luke xiii. 25—28). "Because I have called and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me; for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices." (Prov. i. 24—31). Yes, if men *will not*, come to Christ for his blessings, they will find, to their cost, that he can do without them, and do just as well without them as with them.

CONCLUSION.

1. THE subject presented in this parable, exhibits the great *kindness and benevolence of God* in making this Great Supper. Here we see a world of sinners, justly condemned to everlasting punishment, pitied, and loved, and redeemed, by that very Being whose laws they had violated, and whose authority they had set at nought. Yes, while men were in high-handed rebellion against their Maker, and while he might, with infinite justice, have crushed them all to hell, unpitied and unredeemed, instead of dealing with them "after their sins, and rewarding them according to their iniquities," he "so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." Was there ever such an exhibition of pity and benevolence as this? Surely,

"This was compassion like a God,
That when the Saviour knew
The price of pardon was his blood,
His pity ne'er withdrew."

Well may redeemed sinners exclaim :

“ O, for such love, let rocks and hills
Their lasting silence break ;
And all harmonious human tongues
The Saviour’s praises speak.”

The Apostle Paul gives expression to God’s love in this language: “ Scarcely for a righteous man will one die ; yet, peradventure, for a good man, some would even dare to die : But God commandeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

2. Our remarks on this parable, show us *the folly of mankind*, in being reluctant to come and partake of this Supper. Though provisions are now made, by which men may be delivered from condemnation and eternal death ; and though all things are now ready for man’s comfort and happiness in this world, and the world to come ; and though men are invited to partake freely of all the blessings of salvation ; yet so foolish is man, that he shakes his head, and turns his back upon all the provisions of mercy which are offered for his acceptance, and perishes for ever in consequence. God is ready to ask : “ What more could have been done to save men, that I have not done for them ?” But, after all that has been done, in providing

the Gospel Supper, and inviting men freely to partake, they all, with one consent, begin to make excuse. No wonder God exclaims: "O, that they were *wise*, that they *understood* this, that they would *consider* their latter end." Surely the conduct of those, who neglect to become Christians, evinces any thing rather than *wisdom*, or *understanding*, or *consideration*. Look at it again, infinite riches freely offered to the *poor*, but rejected by them! Eternal happiness offered to the *miserable*, but rejected by them! The friendship of Almighty God offered to the *friendless*, but rejected by them! Eternal misery threatened to the *hell-deserving*, but disregarded by them! O, what infatuated creatures, those who neglect the Gospel, are!

3. This parable brings before our minds the *awful ingratitude of men*. "Hear, O heavens! and give ear, O earth! the Lord hath spoken: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know; my people doth not consider." When God has made arrangements, by which he can "be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus," men would, if left to themselves, frustrate his whole

scheme of benevolence, and thus rob God of the glory of redemption, and plunge their own souls into endless ruin. If men were only left to their natural choice, in regard to God's plan of mercy, not *one* of the whole race of Adam would accept of salvation through Christ, or honour the Father and the Son by obeying the divine commands. They are all naturally disposed to treat God's efforts to do them good, with cold indifference, or infidel contempt. They even take occasion from God's forbearance and kindness, to grow more and more perverse and wicked. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." Here we have a Great Supper, made for the twofold purpose of honouring Christ, and benefiting mankind. But, men are so *ungrateful*, that, if left to their own natural choice, they will neither honour Christ, nor benefit themselves, by coming to this Supper.

4. This subject brings to our view the *distinguishing grace of God*. When the invitation to this Supper was given out, *all who were invited* refused to come. All are naturally alike; all are unwilling to come to Christ for salvation, and to partake of the Supper which

he has provided. If *all* men are reluctant to come—if *all* beg to be excused—how happens it that some do afterwards come to the Supper? Does their *waiting* make their dispositions better? The natural effect of waiting is to harden the heart, and to render it less probable that one will come at all. Well, are those who come, naturally better disposed than those who never come? Does the Bible teach, or do Christians feel, that those who accept offered mercy, are naturally *holy*, or more seriously inclined than those who perish in their sins? Are not all Christians ready to acknowledge that they “*were dead* in trespasses and in sins”—that they “were by nature, children of wrath, even as others?” Who then makes them to differ from others? Who leads them to repent and believe in Jesus, while others remain in impenitence? Who induces them to come to the Gospel Supper, while others stay away? Is the difference to be attributed to themselves, or to the grace of God? Does not every true Christian adopt the language of Paul, and say, “By the grace of God I am what I am?” Does not God take one, and leave another? He does this by death, by sickness, by prosperity, by adversity, and by

his converting grace. God has a perfect right to do what he will with his own creatures. He is under no obligations to convert any. No one deserves any favour from God. He has a right, therefore, to leave all in their sins, or to convert some and leave others. Paul says, "So then hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will, he hardeneth." If God did injustice to any, there would be occasion for finding fault : But there is no unrighteousness or injustice with God. When he shows mercy to any of mankind, and disposes them to come to the Gospel Supper, he does altogether *better* by them than they deserve; and when he declares that none of those who were bidden, but excused themselves, shall taste of his Supper, he does *them* no injustice. He barely deals with them *as they deserve*. His Spirit and grace are his own, and he has a right to dispense them as he pleases, and no one has any business to say unto him, "What doest thou?" While Christians are enjoying the consolations of divine grace, they may adore the distinguishing mercy of God, which has made them to differ from the impenitent world. They may be disposed to ask,

“ Why was *I* made to hear thy voice,
And enter while there's room,
When thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come ?”

And while they ask this question in the language of Dr. Watts, they may be satisfied with Watts' answer :

“ 'Twas the same love that spread the feast,
That gently forced us in ;
Else we had still refused to taste,
And perished in our sin.”

While this will be the language of those who come to the Gospel Supper, those who make excuses and stay away, will *feel*, and will have occasion to feel, that it is their own fault that they are not Christians—that they are not prepared to sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the people of God, in the kingdom of heaven.

5. In view of the truth contained in this parable, we see that God will be *just* in casting off those, who would not honour him by coming to this Great Supper. They do not deserve the Supper at any rate. And after it is offered to them as a gratuity, and they make such foolish and trifling excuses for staying away, it is doubly just that God let them perish without

it. No wonder there will be *wceping*, and *wailing*, and *gnashing of teeth*, when lost sinners see all the redeemed of the Lord in heaven, filled with joy unspeakable and eternal, ascribing "glory, and honour, and thanksgiving, and power, to Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." No wonder the inhabitants of heaven cry, "AMEN, ALLELUIA, while the smoke of the torment of the wicked ascendeth up for ever and ever." All the intelligent universe will see and know, that the lost spirits in hell are receiving but the due reward of their deeds.—They will know that their "damnation is just," and will approve of that sentence which doomed them to everlasting burnings.

6. Finally, it is evident from this subject, that those who have been invited to this Great Supper, but have not accepted the invitation, and have perished in consequence, will be filled with most bitter reflections. They will reflect that they had voluntarily sinned against God, and consequently deserved "the damnation of hell." They will reflect that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believed in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." They will

reflect that, when they might have been saved, by simply *believing in Jesus*, they did not, and would not, believe in him, and receive him as their Saviour. They will reflect that, when God told them plainly that he who believed not in Christ, should be damned, they *would not believe*. They will reflect that, when salvation was offered them without money and without price, they would not accept the offer. They will reflect that, when Christ made this Great Supper, and used all consistent means to induce them to come and share its blessings, "they all with one consent began to make excuse." They will reflect that it is their own fault that they are lost. In every groan of despair, each one will seem to say to his own soul, "*Thou hast destroyed thyself.*"

And now, my dear reader, have you carefully read my remarks on this parable of the Gospel Supper? Have you gone through this little book without becoming a Christian? When the Lord Jesus Christ has made such a precious feast on purpose for you, will you stay away from it and *starve*? Will you perish for ever, when you can have salvation by simply receiving it? Will you make your bed in hell, when it is just as cheap having a mansion in

heaven? Will you spend your eternity with all the wicked beings in the universe, when you may just as well spend it with all the good? Will you curse God for ever, when you may just as well bless him for ever? Will you become a fiend of darkness, when you may just as well be an angel of light? You and I are hastening to the bar of God. I must there render an account for what I have written, and you must render an account for what you have read.—I pray God to bless and save you.

“Sinners, awake betimes; ye fools, be wise;
Awake before the dreadful morning rise;
Change your vain thoughts, your crooked works amend;
Fly to the Saviour—make the Judge your friend;
Lest like a lion, his last vengeance tear
Your trembling souls, and no deliverer near.”

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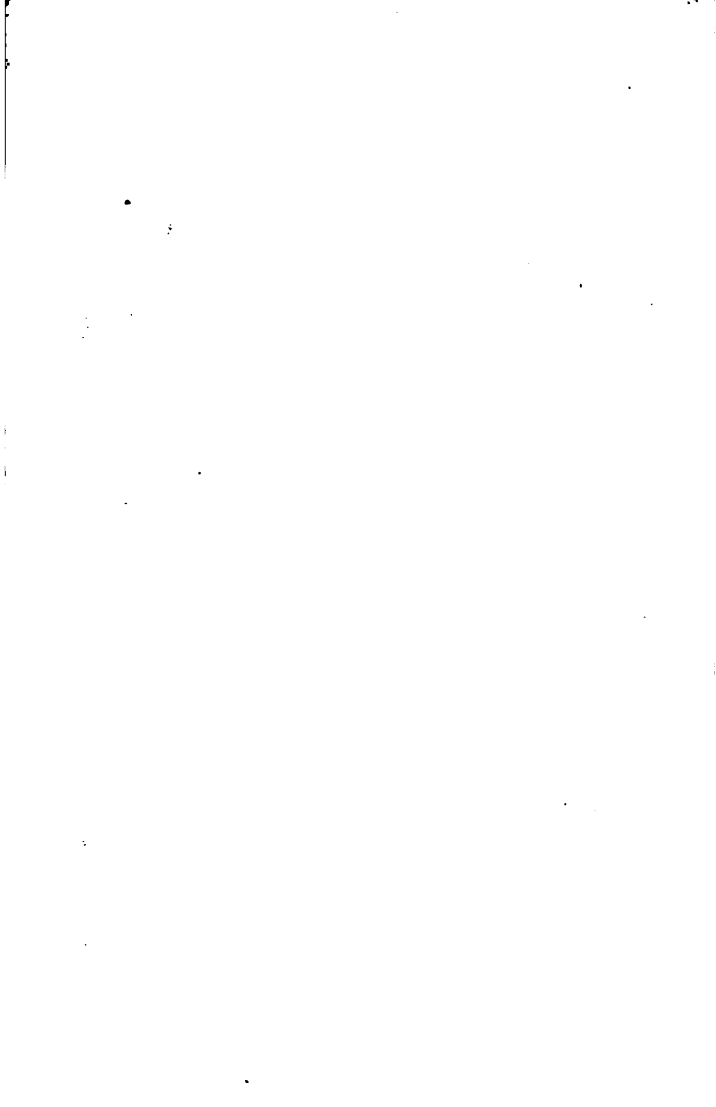
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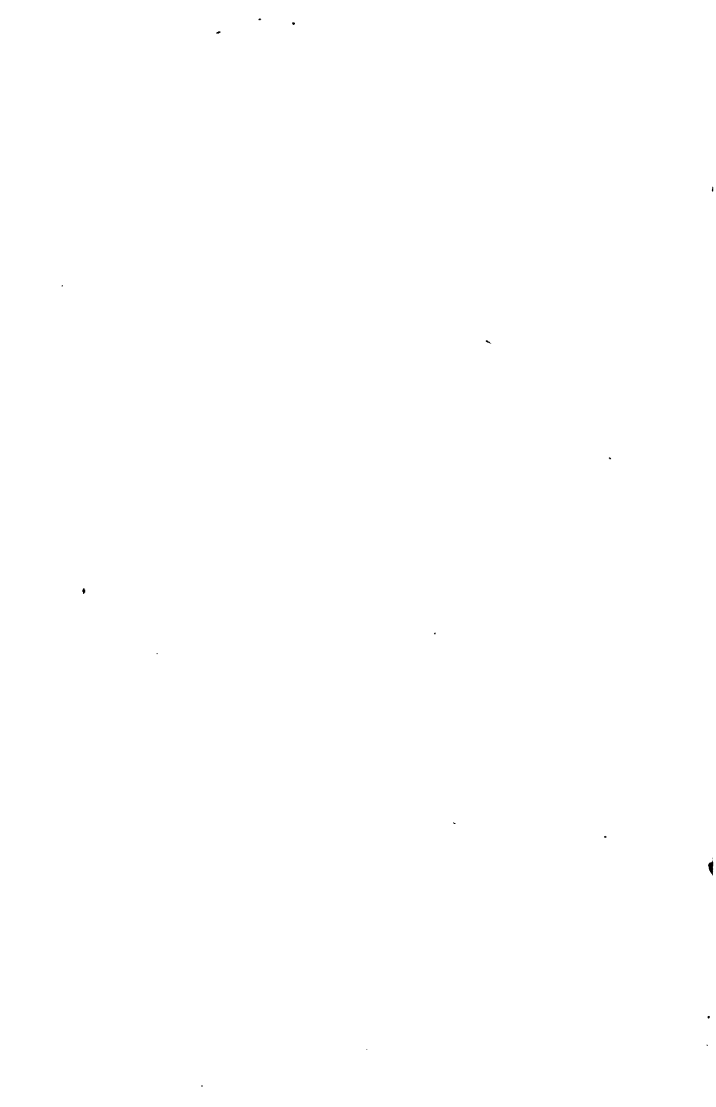
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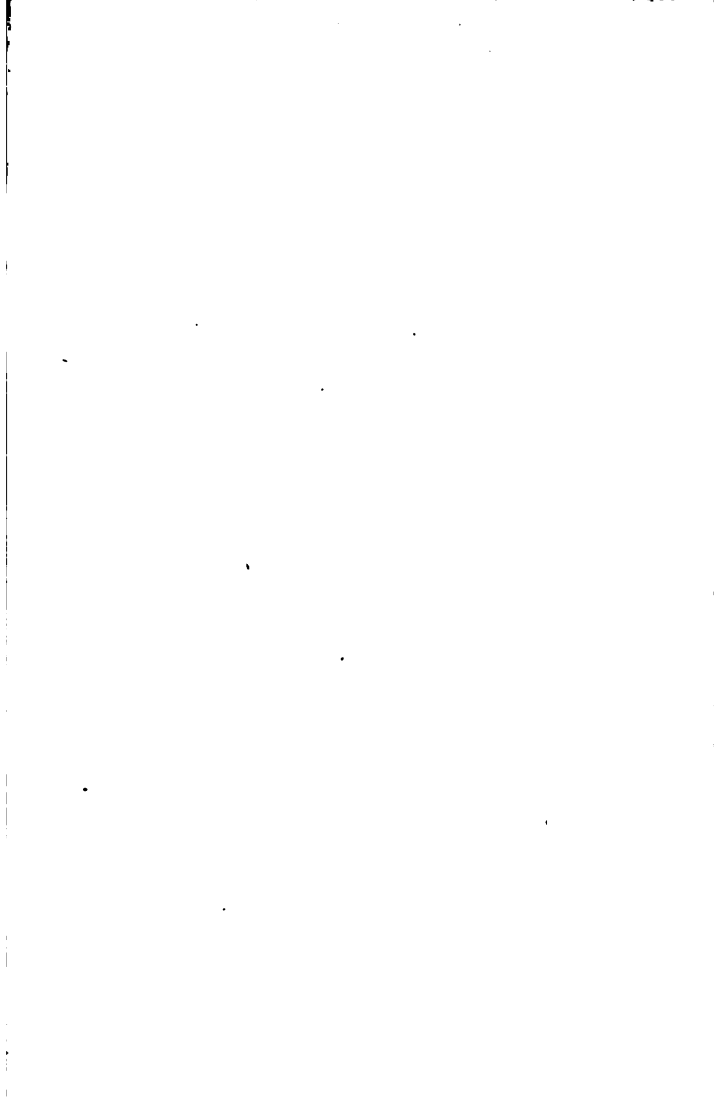
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